Monsieur *RAPIN*'s

Reflections

Aristotle's Treatise

OF

POESIE.

CONTAINING

The Necessary, Rational, and Universal RULES for *Epick*, *Dramatick*, and the other sorts of POETRY.

WITH

Reflections on the Works of the Ancient and Modern POETS, and their Faults noted.

Made English by Mr. *Rymer*; by whom is added some *Reflections* on *English POETS*.

LONDON,

Printed by *T. Warren*, for *H. Herringman*, and Sold by *Francis Saunders*, in the *Lower Walk* of the *New Exchange*. 1694.

E. Webb

JAN 20

THE PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

THE Artiſt would not take pains to poliſh a Diamond, if none beſides himſelf were quick-ſighted enough to diſcern the flaw; And Poets would grow negligent, if the Criticks had not a ſtrict eye over their miſcarriages. Yet it often happens, that this eye is ſo diſtorted by envy or ill nature, that it ſees nothing aright. Some Criticks are like Waſps, that rather annoy the Bees, than terrifie the Drones.

For this ſort of Learning, our Neighbour Nations have got far the ſtart of us; in the laſt *Century*, *Italy* ſwarm'd with Criticks, where amongſt many of

leſs note *Caſtelvetro* oppoſed all comers; and the famous Academy *La Cruſca* was alwayes impeaching ſome or other of the beſt Authors. *Spain*, in thoſe dayes, bred great Wits, but, I think was never ſo crowded, that they needed to fall out and quarrel amongſt themſelves. But from *Italy*, *France* took the Cudgels; and though ſome light ſtrokes paſſed in the dayes of *Marot*, *Baif*, &c. yet they fell not to it in earneſt, nor was any noble Conteſt amongſt them, till the *Royal Academy* was founded, and Cardinal *Richlieu* encouraged and rallied all the ſcattered Wits under his Banner. Then *Malherb* reform'd their ancient licentious *Poetry*; and *Corneille*'s *Cid* rais'd many Factions amongſt them. At this time with us many great Wits flouriſhed, but *Ben Johnſon*, I think, had all the Critical learning to himſelf; and till of late years *England* was as free from Criticks, as it was from *Wolves*, that a harmleſs well-meaning Book might paſs without any danger. But now this priviledge, whatever extraordinary Talent it requires, is uſurped by the moſt ignorant: and they who are leaſt acquainted with the game, are apteſt to bark

bark at every thing that comes in their way. Our fortune is, *Ariſtotle*, on whom our Author make theſe *Reflections*, came to this great work better accompliſhed. He who Criticis'd on the ancient and his contemporary Philoſophers; on *Pythagoras*, *Democritus*, *Empedocles*, *Heraclitus*, *Epicharmus*, *Parmenides*, *Xenophanes*, *Meliſſus*, *Anaxagoras*, *Protagoras*, *Eudoxus*, *Solon*, *Anaximander*, *Anaximenes*, *Plato*, *Speuſippus*; who examin'd and cenſur'd the *Laws* and *Polities* of *Minos*, *Lycurgus*, *Solon*, *Hippodamus*, *Phaleas*, and all the other Commonwealths; 'tis he, I ſay, that undertakes this Province, to paſs a judgment on the *Poets*, and their Works; and him Antiquity firſt honoured with the name of *Critick*.

It is indeed ſuſpected that he dealt not always fairly with the Philoſophers, miſreciting ſometimes, and miſinterpreting their Opinions. But I find him not tax'd of that injuſtice to the *Poets*, in whoſe favour he is ſo ingenious, that to the diſadvantage of his own profeſſion, he declares, *That Tragedy more conduces to the inſtruction of Mankind, than even Philoſophy it ſelf*. And however cryed down in the Schools, and vilified by ſome mo-

dern Philoſophers; ſince Men have had a taſte for *good ſenſe*, and could diſcern the beauties of correct writing, he is prefer'd in the *politeſt* Courts of *Europe*, and by the *Poets* held in great veneration. Not that theſe can ſervilely yield to his Authority, who, of all men living, affect liberty. The truth is, what *Ariſtotle* writes on this Subject, are not the dictates of his own magiſterial will, or dry deductions of his Metaphyſicks: But the Poets were his Maſters, and what was their practice, he reduced to principles. Nor would the *modern Poets* blindly reſign to this practice of the *Ancients*, were not the Reaſons convincing and clear as any demonſtration in *Mathematicks*. 'Tis only needful that we underſtand them, for our conſent to the truth of them. The *Arabians*, 'tis confeſs'd, who glory in their *Poets* and *Poetry*, more than all the World beſides; and who, I ſuppoſe, firſt brought the art of *Riming* into *Europe*, obſerve but little theſe Laws of *Ariſtotle*: yet *Averois* rather chooſes to blame the practice of his Countrymen as vicious, than to allow any imputation on the Doctrine of this *Philoſopher*

On *Ariſt. de Poet.*

pher as imperfect. *Fancy* with them is predominant, is wild, vaſt and unbridled, o're which their *judgment* has little command or authority: hence their conceptions are monſtrous, and have nothing of exactneſs, nothing of reſemblance or proportion.

The Author of theſe *Reflections* is as well known amongſt the *Criticks*, as *Ariſtotle* to the *Philoſophers*: never Man gave his judgment ſo generally, and never was judgment more free and impartial. He might be thought an Enemy to the *Spaniards*, were he not as ſharp on the *Italians*; and he might be ſuſpected to envy the *Italians*, were he not as ſevere on his own Countrymen. Theſe Nations make it a Problem, whether a *Dutchman* or *German* may be a *Wit* or no; and our Author finds none worthy of his Cenſure amongſt them, except *Heinſius* and *Grotius*. Amongſt us he gives *Buchanan* a particular Character: but for ſuch as writ in the *Engliſh* Tongue, he has not, I preſume, underſtood the language ſo well, to paſs a judgment on them: only in general he confeſſes, that we have a *Genius* for *Tragedy* above all other People; one reaſon he gives we

cannot allow of, *viz. The diſpoſition of our Nation*, *which*, he ſaith, *is delighted with cruel things*. 'Tis ordinary to judge of Peoples manners and inclinations by their publick diverſions; and Travellers, who ſee ſome of our *Tragedies*, may conclude us certainly the cruelleſt minded People in *Chriſtendom*.

In another place this Author ſayes of us, *That we are men in an Iſland, divided from the reſt of the world, and that we love blood in our ſports*. And, perhaps, it may be true, that on our Stage are more Murders than on all the Theatres in *Europe*. And they who have not time to learn our Language, or be acquainted with our Converſation, may there in three hours time behold ſo much bloodſhed as may affright them from the inhoſpitable ſhore, as from the Cyclops Den. Let our Tragedy-makers conſider this, and examine whether it be the diſpoſition of the People, or their own *Caprice* that brings this Cenſure on the beſt natur'd Nation under the Sun.

His other Reaſon is our Language, *which*, he ſayes, *is proper for great expreſſions*. The *Spaniſh* is big and faſtuous, proper only for *Rodomontades*, and compar'd

par'd with other Languages, is like the Kettle-drum to Muſick.

The *Italian* is fitteſt for *Burleſque*, and better becomes the mouth of *Petrolin* and *Arloquin* in their *Farces*, than any *Heroick* Character. The perpetual termination in vowels is childiſh, and, themſelves confeſs, rather ſweet than grave.

The *French* wants ſinews for great and heroick Subjects, and even in Love-matters, by their own confeſſion, is a very Infant; the *Italians* call it the *Kitchin-language*, it being ſo copious and flowing on thoſe occaſions.

Meſnardiere. & al. Lenga di Maſſeritie.

The *German* ſtill continues rude and unpoliſht, not yet filed and civiliz'd by the commerce and intermixture with ſtrangers to that ſmoothneſs and humanity which the *Engliſh* may boaſt of.

The diſſyllable Rimes force the *Italians* and *Spaniards* on the *Stanza* in *Heroicks*; which, beſides many other diſadvantages, renders the Language unfit for *Tragedy*.

The *French* now only uſe the long *Alexandrins*, and would make up in length what they want in ſtrength and ſubſtance; yet are they too faint and languiſhing,

languiſhing, and attain not that *numeroſity* which the dignity of Heroick Verſe requires, and which is ordinary in an *Engliſh* Verſe of *ten ſyllables*. But I ſhall not here examine the weight, the fullneſs, the vigour, force, gravity, and the fitneſs of the *Engliſh* for *Heroick Poeſie* above all other Languages; the World expecting theſe matters learnedly and largely diſcuſſed in a particular Treatiſe on that Subject.

Sheringham.

But from our Language proceed to our Writers, and with the freedom of this Author, examine how unhappy the greateſt *Engliſh* Poets have been through their ignorance or negligence of theſe fundamental Rules and Laws of *Ariſtotle*. I ſhall leave the Author of the *Romance of the Roſe* (whom Sir *Richard Baker* makes an *Engliſhman*) for the *French* to boaſt of, becauſe he writ in their Language. Nor ſhall I ſpeak of *Chaucer*, in whoſe time our Language, I preſume, was not capable of any Heroick Character. Nor indeed was the moſt polite Wit of *Europe* in that Age ſufficient for a great *deſign*. That was the Age of *Tales*, *Ballads*, and *Roundelays*.

Bellay. P'aſquier prefers him to the beſt of *Italy.*

lays. Petrarch in thoſe days attempted the *Epick* ſtrain in his *Africa*; but though moſt happy in his *Sonnets* and *Madrigals*, was far too feeble for a work of that weight and importance.

Spencer, I think, may be reckon'd the firſt of our *Heroick Poets*; he had a large ſpirit, a ſharp judgment, and a *Genius* for *Heroick Poeſie*, perhaps above any that ever writ ſince *Virgil*. But our miſfortune is, he wanted a true *Idea*; and loſt himſelf, by following an unfaithful guide. Though beſides *Homer* and *Virgil* he had read *Taſſo*, yet he rather ſuffer'd himſelf to be miſled by *Arioſto*; with whom blindly rambling on *marvellous* Adventures, he makes no Conſcience of *Probability*. All is fanciful and chimerical, without any uniformity, without any foundation in truth; his Poem is perfect *Fairy-land*.

They who can love *Arioſto*, will be raviſh'd with *Spencer*; whilſt men of juſter thoughts lament that ſuch great Wits have miſcarried in their Travels for want of direction to ſet them in the right way. But the truth is, in *Spencer*'s time, *Italy* it ſelf was not well ſatisfied with *Taſſo*; and few amongſt them would

would then allow that he had excell'd their *divine Arioſto*. And it was the vice of thoſe Times to affect ſuperſtitiouſly the *Allegory*; and nothing would then be currant without a myſtical meaning. We muſt blame the *Italians* for debauching great *Spencer*'s judgment; and they caſt him on the unlucky choice of the *Stanza*, which in no wiſe is proper for our Language.

The next for *Epick Poeſie*, is Sir *William D'avenant*, his Wit is well known; and in the Preface to his *Gondibert*, appear ſome ſtrokes of an extraordinary judgment. He is for *unbeaten tracks*, and *new ways of thinking*; but certainly in his *untry'd Seas* he is no great diſcoverer.

One deſign of the *Epick Poets* before him was to adorn their own Country, there finding their *Heroes*, and patterns of Virtue; whoſe Example (as they thought) would have greateſt influence and power over Poſterity; but this Poet ſteers a different courſe, his *Heroes* are all Foreigners: He cultivates a Country that is nothing akin to him, 'tis *Lombardy* that reaps the honour of all.

Et Pater Æneas & Avunculus excitet Hector.

Other

Other Poets choſe ſome *Action* or *Heroe* ſo Illuſtrious, that the name of the Poem prepared the Reader, and made way for its reception: but in this Poem none can divine, what *great action* he intended to celebrate; nor is the Reader obliged to know whether the *Heroe* be *Turk* or *Chriſtian*. Nor do the firſt lines give any light or proſpect into his *deſign*. Methinks, though his Religion could not diſpenſe with an *Invocation*, he needed not have ſcrupled at the *Propoſition*: yet he rather chooſes to enter in at the top of an Houſe, becauſe the morals of *mean* and *ſatisfied minds* go in at the door. And I believe the Reader is not well pleas'd to find his Poem begin with the praiſes of *Aribert*, when the Title had promiſed a *Gondibert*. But before he falls on any other buſineſs, he preſents the Reader with a deſcription of each particular *Heroe*, not truſting their *actions* to ſpeak for them; as former Poets had done. Their practice was fine and artificial, his (he tells us) is a *new way*. Many of his *Characters* have but little of the *Heroick* in them; *Dalga* is a Jilt, proper onely for *Comedy*; *Birtha* for a *Paſtoral*; and *Aſtragon*, in the manner

ner here deſcribed, yields no very great ornament to an *Heroick Poem*; nor are his Battels leſs liable to Cenſure, than thoſe of *Homer*.

He dares not, as other *Heroick Poets*, heighten the *action* by making Heaven and Hell intereſs'd, for fear of offending againſt *probability*; and yet he tells of

---*Threads by patient* Parcæ *ſlowly ſpun.*

And for being dead, his phraſe is,

"*Heaven call'd him, where peacefully he rules a Star.*

And the *Emerald* he gives to *Birtha*, has a ſtronger *tang* of the old Woman, and is a greater *improbability* than all the Enchantments in *Taſſo*. A juſt *medium* reconciles the fartheſt extremes, and due preparation may give credit to the moſt unlikely Fiction. In *Marino*, *Adonis* is preſented with a *Diamond Ring*, where, indeed, the ſtone is much-what of the ſame nature: but this Preſent is made by *Venus*: and from a *Goddeſs* could not be expected a gift of ordinary virtue.

Although a Poet is oblig'd to know all

all Arts and Sciences, yet he ought diſcreetly to manage this knowledge. He muſt have judgment to ſelect what is noble or beautiful, and proper for his occaſion. He muſt by a particular Chymiſtry extract the eſſence of things, without ſoiling his Wit with the groſs and trumpery. But ſome Poets labour to appear skilful with that wretched affectation, they dote on the very terms and *jargon:* expoſing themſelves rather to be laught at by the Apprentices, than to be admir'd by Philoſophers: But whether *D' Avenant* be one of thoſe, I leave others to examine.

The ſort of Verſe he makes choice of, might, I ſuppoſe, contribute much to the vitiating of his ſtile; for thereby he obliges himſelf to ſtretch every period to the end of four lines. Thus the ſenſe is broken perpetually with *parentheſes*, the words jumbl'd in confuſion, and a darkneſs ſpread over all; that the ſenſe is either not diſcern'd, or found not ſufficient for one juſt Verſe, which is ſprinkl'd on the whole *tetraſtick.*

In the *Italian* and *Spaniſh*, where all the *Rimes* are diſſyllable, and the percuſſion ſtronger, this kind of Verſe may be

be neceſſary; and yet to temper that grave march, they repeat the ſame Rime over again, and then they cloſe the *Stanza* with a *Couplet* further to ſweeten the ſeverity. But in *French* and *Engliſh*, where we Rhime generally with onely one ſyllable, the *Stanza* is not allow'd, much leſs the *alternate* Rhime in long Verſe; for the ſound of the Monoſyllable Rhime is either loſt ere we come to its correſpondent, or we are in pain by the ſo long expectation and ſuſpenſe.

This alternate Rhime, and the downright Morality throughout whole *Canto*'s together, ſhew him better acquainted with the *quatrains of Pybrach*, which he ſpeaks of, than with any true Models of *Epick Poeſie*.

After all, he is ſaid to have a particular Talent for the *Manners*: his thoughts are great, and there appears ſomething *roughly Noble* throughout this fragment; which, had he been pleas'd to finiſh it, would, doubtleſs, not have been left ſo open to the attack of Criticks.

A more happy *Genius* for *Heroick Poeſie*, appears in *Cowley*. He underſtood the *purity*, the *perſpicuity*, the *majeſty* of ſtile, and the vertue of *numbers*. He could

could diſcern what was beautiful and pleaſant in Nature, and could expreſs his Thoughts without the leaſt difficulty or conſtraint. He underſtood to diſpoſe of the matters, and to manage his Digreſſions. In ſhort, he underſtood *Homer* and *Virgil*, and as prudently made his advantage of them.

Yet as it may be lamented, that he carried not on the work ſo far as he deſign'd, ſo it might be wiſh'd that he had lived to reviſe what he did leave us: I think the Troubles of *David* is neither title nor matter proper for an *Heroick Poem*; ſeeing it is rather the *actions*, than his Sufferings, that make an *Heroe*: Nor can it be defended by *Homer*'s *Odyſſeis*, ſince *Ulyſſes*'s Sufferings conclude with one *great* and *perfect* action.

After all the heavy Cenſures that jointly from all Criticks have faln on *Lucan*, I do a little wonder that this Author ſhould chuſe *Hiſtory* for the Subject of his Poem, and a Hiſtory where he is ſo ſtrictly ty'd up to the Truth. *Ariſtotle* tells us, *That Poetry is ſomething more excellent, and more philoſophical, than Hiſtory*, and does not inform us what has been done, but teaches what may, and what ought to be

done. And ſince many particulars in ſacred Story are neither *heroick*, nor indeed conſiſtent with the common Principles of Morality, but of a ſingular, extraordinary, and unaccountable Diſpenſation; and ſince in the principal Actions all is carried on by *Machine*, how can theſe Examples be propos'd for great perſons to imitate? or what foundation for their Hopes in *Impoſſibilities? Poetry* has no life, nor can have any operation without *probability*: It may indeed amuſe the People, but moves not the *Wiſe*, for whom alone (according to *Pythagoras*) it is ordain'd.

ἀνὴρ συνέταις, &c. Stob.

Inſtead of one *illuſtrious* and *perfect Action*, which properly is the ſubject of an *Epick* Poem; *Cowley* propoſes to adorn ſome ſeveral particulars of *David*'s Life: and theſe particulars have no neceſſary relation to the end, nor in any wiſe lead to the great revolution: *David* is made King, but this is the work of Heaven, not any atchievement of his own. He neither did, nor ought to lift a Finger for gaining the Crown: he is amongſt the *Amalekites*, whilſt his Work is done without him. This ill choice of a Sub-

a Subject forces the Poet (how excellent otherwiſe ſoever) perpetually on digreſſions: and *David* is the leaſt part of the Poem.

Some, perhaps, may object, That *he begins not his Poem with all the Art and Addreſs as might be deſired. Homer* would make us believe the drawing of *Achilles*, adorn'd with all his glorious Actions, a Deſign too vaſt and impoſſible: and therefore only propoſes his *Reſentment* of the Affront given him by *Agamemnon*; as if any one particular of his Life were ſufficient to employ the greateſt human Wit, with all its *Muſes* and Divine Aſſiſtance. *Achilles* could not be *angry*, but Heaven and Earth are engaged, and juſt matter given for an *Heroick* Poem. Thus whilſt he *propoſes* but one paſſage, we conceive a greater *Idea* of the reſt than any words could expreſs; and whilſt he promiſes ſo little, his Performances are the more admirable and ſurprizing. But in the *Davideis* we have all the *Heroe* at the firſt: In the Propoſition, he is the *beſt Poet*, and the *beſt King*: Now all the Author could do afterwards, is only to make good his Word, and make us conceive of his *He-*

roe the ſame *Idea* at the end of the Poem, which was given us in the beginning; whereas *Homer* calls the Man he deſigns to celebrate barely *Achilles*, Son of *Peleus*, and recording his Actions, leaves others to conclude from them what a great Captain, Prince and Hero this *Achilles* was.

Taſſo left the *Epiſode* of *Sophonia* out of his Poem, becauſe it was *Troppo Lyrico*.

Yet Mr. *Cowley* is not content to mix *matters* that are purely *lyrical* in this Heroick Poem, but employs the *meaſures* alſo.

Yet, notwithſtanding what has been ſaid, we cannot now approve the reaſon (which Sir *Philip Sidney* gives) why Poets are leſs eſteem'd in *England*, than in the other famous Nations, to be *want of Merit*: nor be of their Opinion, who ſay, that *Wit* and *Wine* are not of the growth of our Country. Valour they allow us; but what we gain by our Arms, we loſe by the weakneſs of our Heads: Our good *Ale*, and Engliſh *Beef*, they ſay, may make us *Souldiers*, but are no very good Friends to *Speculation*. Were it proper here to handle this Argument,

gument, and to make compariſons with our Neighbors, it might eaſily, by our Poetry be evinc'd, that our *Wit* was never inferior to theirs, though, perhaps our *Honeſty* made us worſe Politicians. Wit and Valour have always gone together, and Poetry been the Companion of Camps. The Heroe and Poet were inſpired with the ſame Enthuſiaſm, acted with the ſame heat, and both were crown'd with the ſame *Laurel.* Had our Tongue been as generally known, and thoſe who felt our Blows underſtood our Language, they would confeſs, that our Poets had likewiſe done their part, and that our Pens had been as ſucceſsful as our Swords. And certainly, if Sir *Philip Sidney* had ſeen the Poets who ſucceeded him, he would not have judg'd the *Engliſh* leſs deſerving than their Neighbors. In the *Davideis* Fragment (and imperfect as it is) there ſhines ſomething of a more fine, more free, more new, and more noble *Air*, than appears in the *Hieruſalem* of *Taſſo*, which for all his care, is ſcarce perfectly purg'd from *Pedantry.* But in the *Lyrick way* however, *Cowley* far exceeds him, and all the reſt of the *Italians:* though *Lyrick*

Poeſie is their principal Glory, and Pope *Urban* VIII. had the Honour, a little before him, to enrich modern Poeſie with the *Pindarick* Strains. Many the greateſt Wits of *France* have attempted the *Epick*, but their performance anſwer'd not Expectation; our Fragments are more worth than their finiſh'd pieces: And though, perhaps, want of Encouragement has hinder'd our Labours in the *Epick*, yet for the *Drama*, the World has nothing to be compared with us. But a Debate of this importance is not the work of a Preface; I ſhall only here, on the behalf of our *Engliſh Poetry*, give one ſingle inſtance, and leave the Reader to judge of *Hercules* by his *Foot*.

Amongſt the *common* places (by *which Scaliger*, and before him *Macrobius*, *Agellius*, and the other Criticks have compared the Poets, and examin'd their *Worth*) none has been more generally, and more happily handled, and in none have the Nobleſt Wits, both ancient and modern, more contended with each other for Victory, than in the *deſcription of the night*. Yet in this the *Engliſh* has the Advantage, and has even outdone them where they have outdone themſelves. The

firſt

first I meet with, who had the *Lucky hit*, is *Apollonius*, in his *Argonautiques*.

Νὺξ μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἄγεν κνέφας, οἱ δ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
Ναῦται εἰς ἑλικήν τε καὶ ἀστέρας ὠρίωνος
Ἔδρακον ἐκ νηῶν, ὕπνοιό τε καί τις ὁδίτης
Ἤδη καὶ πυλαωρὸς ἐέλδετο, καί τινα παίδων
Μητέρα τεθνεότων ἀδινὸν περὶ κῶμ' ἐκάλυπτεν.
Οὐδὲ κυνῶν ὑλακὴ ἔτ' ἀνὰ πτόλιν, οὐ θρόος ἦεν
Ἠχήεις, σιγὴ δὲ μελαινομένην ἔχεν ὄρφνην.
Ἀλλὰ μάλ' οὐ μήδειαν ἐπὶ γλυκερὸς λάβεν ὕπνος.

Here we have variety of matter, yet rather *many*, than *choice* Thoughts. He gives us the Face of things both by Land and Sea, City and Countrey, the Mariner, the Traveller, the Door-keeper, the Mistriss of the Family, her Child and Dog; but loses himself amongst his Particulars, and seems to forget for what occasion he mentions them. He would say, that all the World is fast asleep, but only *Medea*; and then his Mariners, who are gazing from their Ships on *Helice* and *Orion*, can serve but little for his purpose; unless they may be supposed to sleep with their Eyes open. Neither dares he say, that the Traveller and Porter are yet taking a Nap, but only that they have a good mind to't. And after all, we find none but the good Woman,

who had loſt her Child (and ſhe indeed is faſt) aſleep, unleſs the Dogs may likewiſe be ſuppoſed ſo, becauſe they had left off barking. And theſe, methinks, were ſcarce worthy to be taken notice of in an *Heroick Poem*, except we may believe that in the *old time*, or that in *Greek* they bark Heroically. *Scaliger*, as his manner is, to prefer *Virgil*, calls this deſcription mean and vulgar. *Virgil* well ſaw the levity and trifling of the *Greeks*, and from him we may expect ſomething better digeſted.

Nox erat, & placidum carpebant feſſa ſoporem
Corpora per terras, ſylvæque & ſæva quierant
Æquora, cum medio volvuntur ſydera lapſu:
Cum tacet omnis ager, pecudes pictæque volucres
Quæque lacus late liquidos, quæque aſpera dumis
Rura tenent, ſomno poſitæ ſub nocte ſilenti
Lenibant curas, & corda oblita laborum.

[Æn. *l.* 4.]

Againſt this may be objected, That Sleep being of ſuch a ſoft and gentle nature, that 'tis ſaid to ſteal upon our Senſes, the word [*carpebant*] ſuits but ill with it; this word ſeeming to imply a force, and might rather expreſs the Violence of Robbers, than the Slyneſs

of

of a Thief. Nor can it be pretended that [*ſopor*] ſignifies a kind of violent and ſnoring Sleep, for here we have it *placidum ſoporem*. Inſtead of *Woods* and *Seas*, *Taſſo* rather chuſes to joyn *Winds* and *Seas*, as of a nearer relation, and going more naturally together; the Commentators being certainly miſtaken, who would have a *Metonymie* in this place. The third Verſe I can ſcarce believe legitimate: the *Words* ſpeak nothing but motion, and the *Numbers* are ſo ratling, that nothing can be more repugnant to the general Repoſe and Silence which the Poet deſcribes: Or, if any Copies might favour the conjecture, I ſhould rather read

——*Cum medio librantur ſydera curſu.*

For, nothing can be more poetical, than to ſuppoſe the Stars reſt (as it were pois'd) in their Meridian; and this would not only expreſs it to be Midnight, but heighten the Poet's deſign, which by the common reading is abſolutely deſtroy'd. The fifth Line ſeems to bear a doubtful face, and looks not unlike ſomething of equivocation: an ordinary

nary *Grammarian* would ſeek no further than the antecedent [*volucres*] to refer theſe relatives to, and might conſtrue Wild Ducks, and Woodcocks, what the Poet intended for *Fiſh* in the Sea, and the *Wild Beaſts* of the Foreſt.

Beſides this, I find none amongſt the *Latins* that deſerves to be brought into compariſon. In the *Italian*, *Arioſto* (whoſe every deſcription is ſaid to be a *Maſterpiece*) in this is not over-fortunate; he is eaſie and ſmooth, but produces nothing of his own invention. He only enlarges on a thought of *Virgil*'s, which yet he leaves without that *turn* which might give it perfection. What I think is more conſiderable, is this of *Taſſo*.

Era la notte all'hor, ch' alto ripoſo
Han l'onde, e i venti, e parea muto il mondo:
Gli animai laſſi, e quei, che 'l mar ondoſo,
O de' liquidi laghi alberga il fondo,
E chi ſi giace in tana, o in mandra aſcoſo,
E i pinti augelli ne l' oblio profondo,
Sotto il ſilentio de' ſecreti horrori,
Sopian gli affanni, e raddolciano i cori.

Taſſo,

Taſſo, when he reform'd his Poem, could mend nothing in this deſcription, but repeats it entire in his *Hieruſalem liberata*, without any alteration. 'Tis well nigh *word for word* taken out of *Virgil*, and (to give it its due) is a moſt excellent Tranſlation. He moſt judiciouſly leaves out that *Hemiſtick*, *volvuntur ſydera lapſu*, the place whereof is (perhaps from *Statius*) ſupply'd with *parea muto il mondo*. Yet on the other hand here ſeems to be ſome ſuperfluity of Fiſh; *thoſe in the Sea, and thoſe at the bottom of the Lakes*, are more by half than *Virgil*, or, perhaps, than *Taſſo* had occaſion for in this place.

Achilleidos, l. 1. *mutumq; ampectitur orbem.*

But that we may have ſomething *new* from the *Italians* on this Subject, *Marino* has taken care in his *Adonis*, *Canto* 13.

Notte era, allhor che dal diurno moto
Ha requie ogni penſier, tregna ogni duolo,
L'onde giacean, tacean zefiro, e Noto,
E cedeva il quadrante a l' horivolo,
Sopra l' huom la fatica, il peſce il nuoto,
La fera il Corſo, e l' augelletto il volo.
Aſpettando il tornar del novo lume
Tra l' alghe, o tra rami, o ſu le piume.

In

In theſe we have more of the Fancy, than of the Judgment; variety of matter, rather than exquiſite ſenſe. *Marino* is perfectly himſelf throughout; the *thoughts diurnal motion*, I fear, will ſcarce paſs for a very pathetical Expreſſion; nor *will* it ſatisfie, that he makes *Zephyrus* and the *South-wind ſilent*; if he particularize theſe, he ſhould alſo name the reſt, otherwiſe the *Eaſt-wind* and *Boreas* have leave to bluſter. But, above all, he tells us, that the *Clocks* have got the better of the *Sun-dials*. A Thought purely New, and ſtrangely Heroick: What could come more ſudden or ſurprizing? In the latter part of the *Stanza* we have ſome Strokes of *Arioſto*, but far more lame and imperfect than the Original. Neither ought he in this place to ſpeak of any expecting the return of the light, *omnia noctis erant*.

But I haſten to the *French*, amongſt whom none more eminent than *Chapelain*, nor was ever a Poem of greater expectation. His deſcription is thus:

Cepen-

Cependant la nuit vole,& ſous ſon aille obſcure
Invite a ſommeiller l' agiſſante Nature.
Dans les plains des airs tient les vents en repoſe,
Et ſur les champs ſales fait repoſer les flots,
A tout ce qui ſe meut, a tout ce qui reſpire
Dans les pres,dans les bois le repos elle inſpire,
Elle ſuſpend par tout les travaux & les bruits,
Et par tout dans les cœurs aſſoupit les ennuis.
Charles ſeul eſveille-----

This Deſcription is perfect *French*. There is ſcarce any coming at a little ſenſe, 'tis ſo encompaſs'd about with Words. What *Virgil* or *Taſſo* would have diſpatched in half a Verſe, here fills out the meaſures of two whole *Alexandrins*.

Some Caviller would object, That ſince the *Night* flies, there is little Sleep to be got under her Wing, unleſs for ſuch as can *walk* in their ſleep: And that the *Night* might have ſpared this *invitation*, ſeeing thoſe ſhe invites are aſleep already: *Charles alone is awake*, and for that reaſon, *was* the only thing fit to be invited; and doubtleſs the *Night was* as free of her invitation to him, as to any others,

others, 'twas his fault that he had no Stomach to't. And here is much power given to the *Night*, which ſhe has no claim or title to: 'tis not the *Night* that makes the *Waves and Winds*, and all the things that *move and breath in Meads and Woods* to *repoſe*. She only invites them to ſleep, and it is Sleep that makes them reſt. In the ſpace of four lines we meet with *repos*, *repoſer*, *repos*, which argue the Language very barren, or elſe the Poet extreamly negligent, and a lover of repoſe. He tells us, That the Night *inſpires Repoſe*. But certainly motion is a more likely thing to be inſpired, than reſt, as more properly the effect of breath.

But without examining this further, let us try if *Le Moyne* (whom our Critick prefers before all others of the *French Epick* Poets) be more fortunate.

Cependant le ſoleil ſe couche dans ſon lit,
Que luymeſme de pourpre & de laque embellit:
Et la nuit qui ſurvient auſſi triſte que ſombre,
De toute les couleurs ne fuit que une grand' ombre;
Aveque le ſommeil le ſilence la ſuit,
L' un amy du repos, l' autre ennemy du bruit:

Et

Et quoique ſous leur pas. la tempeſte ſe taiſe,
Quoique le vent s' endorme & que l' onde
s' appaiſe.

[St. Louys.]

Here again are words in abundance. He cannot tell us that 'tis Midnight, till he firſt have informed us that *the Sun is gone to Bed*, to a fine Bed of *his own trimming*: and this is matter enough for the firſt two Verſes. Then we are told, that the *Night of all Colours makes but one great ſhade*; and this ſuffices for the ſecond *Couplet*. *Auſſi triſte que ſombre*, is an expreſſion the *French* are ſo delighted with, they can ſcarce name any thing of Night without it. The third Couplet is much what as in a Bill of Fare:

Item----Beef and Muſtard,
That Friend to th' Stomach, this a Foe to
th' Noſe.

The ſecond line in both being alike impertinent.

Any further *Reflections*, or more Examples, would be ſuperfluous. What has been noted, rather concerns the Niceties of *Poetry*, than any the little trifles of

of *Grammar*. We have ſeen what the nobleſt Wits both ancient and modern have done in other Languages, and obſerv'd, that in their very Maſter-pieces they ſometimes trip, or are however liable to Cavils. It now remains, that our *Engliſh* be expos'd to the like impartial Cenſure.

All things are huſh'd, as Natures ſelf lay dead,
The Mountains ſeem to nod their drowſie head,
The little Birds in dreams their Songs repeat,
And ſleeping flowers beneath the Night-dew ſweat,
Even Luſt and Envy ſleep.

[In the Conqueſt of *Mexico*.]

In this deſcription, four Lines yield greater variety of matter, and more choice thoughts than twice the number of any other Language. Here is ſomething more *fortunate* than the boldeſt Fancy has yet reached, and ſomething more *juſt*, than the ſevereſt Reaſon has obſerv'd. Here are the *flights* of *Statius* and *Marino* temper'd with a more diſcerning judgment, and the *judgment* of *Virgil* and *Taſſo* animated with a more ſprightly

ſprightly Wit. Nothing has been ſaid ſo expreſſive and ſo home in any other Language as the firſt Verſe in this deſcription. The ſecond is *Statius* improv'd.

Et ſimulant feſſos curvata cacumina ſomnos,

Saith *Statius*, where *ſimulant* is a bold word in compariſon of our *Engliſh* word *ſeem*, being of an active ſignification; and *cacumina* may as well be taken for the tops of Trees, as the tops of Mountains, which doubtful meaning does not ſo well content the Reader, as the certainty.

In the *third* Verſe, 'tis not ſaid that the Birds ſleep, but what is more new, and more Poetical, their ſleep is imply'd, by their Dreams. Somewhat like to the *Fourth* we have in *Marino*.

---------E languidetti i fiori
Giaceano a l'herba genitrice in ſeno.
[Adonis, Canto 20.]

Which is a pretty image, but has not ſo near a reſemblance with Truth, nor can ſo generally be apply'd to all flow-

ers. Our Author here dares not ſay directly that the flowers ſleep, which might ſound a little harſh, but ſlurs it over in the *participle*, as taken for granted, and affirms only, that they *ſweat*, which the *Night-dew* makes very eaſie.

In the laſt half-verſe we may ſee how far our Author has out-done *Apollonius*. 'Twas no ſuch ſtrange thing in the ſorrowful Woman, when ſhe had ſpent her Tears, for Sleep to cloſe her Eyes: But here we have the moſt raging and watchful Paſſions *Luſt* and *Envy*. And theſe too inſtead of the luſtful and the envious, for the greater force and emphaſis, in the *Abſtract*.

Some may object, That the *third* Verſe does contradict the *firſt*. How can *all things be huſh'd, if Birds in Dreams repeat their Songs?* Is not this like the indiſcretion of *Marino*, who ſays, *That the Winds, and all things are huſht, and the Seas ſo faſt aſleep, that they ſnore.* [Canto 20.]

It may be anſwer'd, That in this place 'tis not the Poet that ſpeaks, but another perſon; and that the Poet here truly repreſents the Nature of Man, whoſe firſt thoughts break out in bold and more gene-

general Terms, which by the ſecond thoughts are more correct and limited. As if one ſhould ſay, all things are ſilent, or aſleep however; if there is any noiſe, 'tis ſtill but the effect of Sleep, as the Dreams of Birds, *&c.* This compariſon might be much further improved to our advantage, and more obſervations made, which are left to the Reader's Ingenuity.

Advertiſement.

SInce it is not ſo much to inſtruct, as to exerciſe the Wits, *that I make theſe* Reflections *publick; I am not ſo vain to think them* neceſſary, *nor yet humble enough to believe them altogether* unprofitable. *This* Treatiſe *is no* New Model *of* Poeſie; *for that of* Ariſtotle *only is to be adhered to, as the exacteſt Rule for governing the Wit. In effect, this* Treatiſe *of* Poeſie, *to ſpeak properly, is nothing elſe, but* Nature *put in method, and* Good ſenſe *reduc'd to Principles. There is no arriving at Perfection but by theſe Rules, and they certainly go aſtray that take a different courſe. What faults have not moſt of the* Italian, Spaniſh, *and other Poets fallen into, through their ignorance of theſe Principles. And if a* Poem *made by theſe Rules fails of ſucceſs, the fault lies not in the Art, but in the Artiſt; all who have writ of this Art, have followed no other* Idea *but that of* Ariſtotle.

Advertiſement.

Horace *was the firſt who propos'd this* great Model *to the* Romans. *And by this all the* great Men *in the Court of* Auguſtus *form'd their Wits, who apply'd themſelves to make Verſe.* Petronius *(whom no man of modeſty dares name, unleſs on the account of thoſe directions he gave for writing) amongſt the Ordures of his* Satyre, *gives certain Precepts for* Poetry *that are admirable. He is diſguſted with the ſtile of* Seneca *and* Lucan, *which to him ſeem'd affected, and contrary to the Principles of* Ariſtotle. *'Tis at them he levels with thoſe glances, that ſlip from him againſt the* Poetaſters, *and falſe Declamators. Nothing more judicious was writ in thoſe days, yet himſelf had not that eaſie and natural way, which he requires ſo much in others. He gives the beſt Rules in the World againſt* affectation, *which he never obſerves himſelf. For he commends even to the* ſimplicity of Stile, *whereas his own is not always* natural. *To ſay the truth, what is good on this Subject, is all taken from* Ariſtotle, *who is the only* ſource *whence good ſenſe is to be drawn, when one goes about to write.*

We

Advertiſement.

We have had no Books of Poeſie *till this laſt Age; when that of* Ariſtotle, *with his other Works, were brought from* Conſtantinople *to* Italy; *where immediately appear'd a great number of* Commentators, *who writ upon this Book of* Poeſie: *the chief whereof were* Victorius, Robortellus, Madius, *who* literally *enough interpreted the* Text *of this Philoſopher, without diving much into his* meaning. *Theſe were followed by* Caſtelvetro, Piccolomini, Beni, Riccobon, Majoragius, Minturnus, Vida, Patricius, Andre Gili, Voſſius, *and many others. But* Voſſius *has commented on him meerly as a* Scholiaſt, Gili *as a Rhetorician,* Patricius *as an Hiſtorian,* Vida *as a Poet, who endeavours more to pleaſe than to inſtruct;* Minturnus *as an Orator,* Majoragius *and* Riccobon *as Logicians,* Beni *as a Doctor who has a ſound Judgment when the Honour of his Country is not concern'd. For he compares* Arioſto *with* Homer, *and* Taſſo *with* Virgil, *in a Treatiſe made expreſly on that Subject.* Caſtelvetro *and* Piccolomini *have acquitted themſelves as able Criticks, and much better than the reſt,* Piccolomini *deals with* Ariſtotle *more fairly than* Caſtelvetro: *who is naturally of a moroſe Wit, and out of a croſs humor makes*

it always his buſineſs to contradict Ariſtotle, *and for the moſt part confounds the Text, inſtead of explaining it. Notwithſtanding all this, he is the moſt ſubtle of all the Commentators, and the man from whom moſt may be learned.*

In fine, Lope de Vega *was the only perſon that undertook, on the good fortune of his old reputation, to hazard a new method of* Poeſie, *which he calls* El Arte Nuevo, *wholly different from this of* Ariſtotle, *to juſtifie the fabrick of his* Comedies, *which the* Wits *of his Country inceſſantly criticiz'd upon; which Treatiſe ſucceeded ſo ill, that it was not judg'd worthy of a place amongſt the reſt, in the Collection of his Works, becauſe he followed not* Ariſtotle. *Which I have preciſely done in theſe* Reflections: *where I bring only* Examples *to confirm the* Rules *he gives us. And I take occaſion to tell what we ought to judge of all thoſe who have writ in Verſe for more than theſe two thouſand years. I diſpence with my ſelf for ſpeaking of thoſe who are yet living: for I am not in humour to mount the Stage, and diſtribute Laurels; I had rather rely on the Publick, for the opinion we ought to have of their merit.*

Advertiſement.

For the reſt, I chuſe rather to write by way of Reflections, *to avoid all thoſe words which are neceſſary for* Connexion, *in a continued Diſcourſe. And ſince theſe* Reflections *may, peradventure, be offenſive to ſome perſons of a different* Genius, *I expect from them to hear of my miſtakes, that I may make my profit thereof.*

Monſieur

Monſieur *RAPIN*'s Reflections ON *Ariſtotle's Treatiſe* OF POESIE In General.

I.

THE true value of *Poetry* is ordinarily ſo little known, that ſcarce ever is made a true Judgment of it. 'Tis the talent of Wits only that are above the common rank to eſteem of it according to

to its Merit: and one cannot conſider, how *Alexander*, *Scipio*, *Julius Cæſar*, *Auguſtus*, and all the great men of Antiquity have been affected therewith, without conceiving a Noble Idea of it. In effect *Poeſie*, of all Arts, is the moſt perfect: for the perfection of other Arts is limited, but this of *Poeſie* has no bounds; to be excellent therein, one muſt know all things: but this value will beſt appear, by giving a particular of the Qualities neceſſary for a Poet.

II.

HE muſt have a Genius extraordinary, great Natural Gifts; a Wit juſt, fruitful, piercing, ſolid, univerſal; an Underſtanding *clean* and *diſtinct*; an Imagination neat and pleaſant; an elevation of Soul that depends not on Art nor Study, and which is purely a gift of Heaven, and muſt be ſuſtain'd by a lively ſenſe and vivacity; a great Judgment to conſider wiſely of things, and a Vivacity to expreſs them with that grace and abundance which gives them Beauty. But as Judgment without Wit is cold and

and heavy, ſo Wit without Judgment is blind and extravagant. Hence it is that *Lucan* often in his *Pharſalia* grows flat for want of Wit. And *Ovid* in his *Metamorphoſis* ſometimes loſes himſelf through his defect of Judgment. *Arioſto* has too much flame: *Dante* has none at all. *Boccace*'s Wit is juſt, but not copious: the Cavalier *Marino* is luxuriant, but wants that juſtneſs; for, in fine, to accompliſh a Poet, is required a temperament of Wit and of Fancy, of Strength and of Sweetneſs, of Penetration and of Delicacy: and above all things, he muſt have a ſoveraign Eloquence, and a profound Capacity. Theſe are the Qualities that muſt concur together to form the Genius of a Poet, and ſuſtain his Character.

III.

BUt the firſt *Injuſtice* that Poets ſuffer, is, that commonly what is meerly the effect of Fancy, is miſtaken for Wit. Thus an ignorant perſon ſhall *ſtart* up, and be thought a Poet in the World, for a lucky hit in a Song or Catch, where

is only the empty flaſh of an imagination heated perhaps by a debauch, and nothing of that cœleſtial fire which only is the portion of an extraordinary Genius. *One muſt be careful* (ſaith *Horace*) *of prophaning that Name, by beſtowing it without diſtinction on all thoſe who undertake to verſifie. For* (ſaith he) *there muſt be a greatneſs of Soul, and ſomething divine in the Spirit. There muſt be lofty expreſſions, and noble thoughts, and an air of majeſty to deſerve that name.* A Sonnet, Ode, Elegy, Epigram, and thoſe little kind of Verſes that often make ſo much noiſe in the World, are ordinarily no more than the meer productions of Imagination, a ſuperficial wit, with a little converſation of the World, is capable of theſe things. True *Poetry* requires other Qualifications, a Genius for War, or for Buſineſs, comes nothing near it; a little Flegm, with a competency of Experience, may fit a man for an important Negotiation; and an opportunity well manag'd, joyn'd with a little hazard, may make the ſucceſs of a Battel, and all the good fortune of a Campaign; but to excite theſe emotions of the Soul, and tranſportsof admiration that are expected from *Poetry*, all

the

the Wit that the Soul of Man is capable of, is ſcarce ſufficient. For an Example,

IV.

Homer, who had a Genius accompliſh'd for *Poetry*, had the vaſteſt, ſublimeſt, profoundeſt, and moſt univerſal Wit that ever was; 'twas by his Poems that all the Worthies of Antiquity were form'd: from hence the Law-makers took the firſt Platform of the Laws they gave to Mankind; the Founders of Monarchies and Common-wealths from hence took the Model of their Polities. Hence the Philoſophers found the firſt Principles of Morality which they have taught the People. Hence Phyſicians have ſtudied Diſeaſes, and their Cures. Aſtronomers have learn'd the knowledge of Heaven, and Geometricians of the Earth. Kings and Princes have learn'd the art to govern, and Captains to form a Battel, to encamp an Army, to beſiege Towns, to fight and to gain Victories. From this great original *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, came to be Philoſophers. *Sophocles* and *Euripides* took the haughty

haughty air of the Theatre and Idea's of Tragedy. *Zeuxes*, *Appelles*, *Polygnotus*, became ſuch excellent Painters; and *Alexander* the Great ſo valiant. In fine, *Homer* has been (if I may ſo ſay) the firſt Founder of all Arts and Sciences, and the pattern of the Wiſe men in all Ages. And as he has been in ſome manner the Author of *Paganiſm*, the Religion whereof he eſtabliſh'd by his Poems; one may ſay, that never Prophet had ſo many Followers as he: yet notwithſtanding this ſo univerſal Genius, this Wit capable of all things, apply'd himſelf only to *Poetry*, which he made his buſineſs.

V.

'TIS in no wiſe true, what moſt believe, That ſome little mixture of Madneſs goes to make up the Character of a Poet; for though his Diſcourſe ought in ſome manner to reſemble that of one inſpir'd; yet his Mind muſt always be ſerene, that he may diſcern when to *let his Muſe run mad*, and when to govern his Tranſports. And this ſerenity of

ſpirit which makes the judgment, is one of the moſt eſſential parts of a Poet's Genius, 'tis with this that he muſt be poſſeſs'd. *Ariſtotle* allows that there is ſomething Divine in his Character, but nothing of Madneſs. Theſe the Vulgar always confound, and 'tis their ignorance joyn'd with the extravagance of ſome particular Poets that made way for this opinion, to the diſreſpect of the profeſſion, which is not conſider'd in the World as it ought to be, by reaſon of the little care to diſtinguiſh thoſe that are Poets, from thoſe that are not.

VI.

ONE may be an Orator without the natural gift of Eloquence, becauſe Art may ſupply that defect; but no Man can be a Poet without a Genius: the want of which, no art or induſtry is capable to repair. This Genius is that celeſtial fire intended by the Fable, which enlarges and heightens the Soul, and makes it expreſs things with a lofty air. Happy is he to whom Nature has made

this preſent, by this he is raiſed above himſelf; whereas others are always low and creeping, and never ſpeak but what is mean and common. He that hath a Genius, appears a Poet on the ſmalleſt Subjects, by the turn he gives them, and the noble manner in which he expreſſes himſelf. This Character the *French* gave their Monſieur *Racan*: but in truth where ſhall we find all theſe Qualities I have mentioned? Where is that ſparkling Wit, and that ſolid Judgment? that Flame and that Flegm? that Rapture and that Moderation which conſtitute that Genius we enquire after? 'Tis the little Wits always who think they verſifie the beſt; the greateſt Poets are the moſt modeſt. 'Twas with trembling that *Virgil* under the covert of the Night went to fix on the Gate of the Emperor's Palace thoſe two Verſes which cauſed ſo much admiration all over *Rome*. This great man conceal'd himſelf, when *Auguſtus* ſo earneſtly made ſearch after the Author of that admirable Diſtich, and he was the laſt that underſtood the value of his own Work: 'Tis certain that the great Wits never have a very good Opinion of what they compoſe, by reaſon

ſon of the too great Idea of perfection they propoſe to themſelves in their Works. Happy Age, when Poets were ſo modeſt, when ſhall we ſee thoſe days again! nothing is more troubleſome than a Scribler conceited of his own Merit, he tires all the World, eternally ſhewing his Labours; and no ſooner is he able to make a Rhime at the end of a Line, but all the World muſt be made to know his Talent; whereas the great men are in pain whilſt they ſhew themſelves, and induſtriouſly labour to be conceal'd.

VII.

IT is not eaſily decided what the Nature, and what preciſely is the End of this Art, the Interpreters of *Ariſtotle* differ in their Opinions. Some will have the End to be Delight, and that 'tis on this account it labours to move the Paſſions, all whoſe motions are delightful, becauſe nothing is more ſweet to the Soul than agitation, it pleaſes it ſelf in changing the Objects, to ſatisfie the immenſity of its Deſires. 'Tis true, Delight is the end *Poetry* aims at, but not

the principal end, as others pretend. In effect, *Poetry* being an Art, ought to be profitable by the quality of its own nature, and by the eſſential ſubordination that all Arts ſhould have to Polity, whoſe end in general is the Publick good. This is the judgment of *Ariſtotle*, and of *Horace*, his chief Interpreter.

VIII.

AFter all, ſince the deſign of *Poetry* is to delight, it omits nothing that may contribute thereto; 'tis to this intent that it makes uſe of Numbers and Harmony, which are naturally delightful, and animates its Diſcourſe with more lively Draughts, and more ſtrong Expreſſions, than are allow'd in Proſe; and does affranchize it ſelf from that conſtraint and reſervedneſs that is ordinary with Orators, and permits a great liberty to imagination, and makes frequent Images of what is moſt agreeable in nature; and never ſpeaks but with figures, to give a greater luſtre to the Diſcourſe; and is noble in its Idea's, ſublime in the Expreſſions, bold in the Words,

Words, paſſionate in the Motions, and takes pleaſure in relating extraordinary Adventures, to give the moſt common and natural things a fabulous gloſs, to render them more admirable, and heighten Truth by Fiction. 'Tis finally for this, that it employs whatever Art has that is pleaſant, becauſe its end is to delight. *Empedocles*, who uſed not this art in his Poems, as *Homer*, nor *Lucretius*, as *Virgil*, are not true Poets. *Homer* is delightful even in the deſcription of *Laertes Swineherd*'s lodge in his *Odyſſis*, and *Virgil* in the Dung and Thiſtles in his Georgicks, as he expreſſes himſelf; for, every thing becomes beautiful and flowry in the hands of a Poet who hath a Genius.

IX.

HOwever the principal end of *Poeſie*, is to profit; not only by refreſhing the Mind, to render it more capable of the ordinary Functions, and by aſſwaging the troubles of the Soul with its Harmony, and all the Elegancies of Expreſſion. But furthermore, by purging the Manners with wholſome Inſtructions which it profeſſes to adminiſter to Humane kind; for Virtue being naturally auſtere, by the Conſtraint it impoſes on the Heart, in repreſſing the Deſires: Morality, which undertakes to regulate the Motions of the Heart by its Precepts, ought to make it ſelf delightful that it may be liſtened to, which can by no means be ſo happily effected as by *Poetry*: 'Tis by this, that Morality in curing the Maladies of Men, makes uſe of the ſame Artifice that Phyſicians have recourſe to in the Sickneſs of Children, they mingle Honey with the Medicine to take off the Bitterneſs. The principal Deſign therefore of this Art, is to render pleaſant that

that which is wholeſome; in which 'tis more wiſe than other Arts, which endeavour to profit without any Care to pleaſe. Eloquence it ſelf, by its moſt paſſionate Diſcourſe, is not always capable to perſwade Men to Virtue with that Succeſs, as *Poetry*; becauſe Men are more ſenſible and ſooner impreſs'd upon by what is pleaſant, than by Reaſon. For this cauſe, all *Poetry* that tends to the Corruption of Manners, is irregular and vicious; and *Poets* are to be look'd on as a publick Contagion, whoſe Morals are not pure: and 'tis theſe diſſolute and debauch'd *Poets* that *Plato* baniſh'd his Commonwealth. And true it is, that the petty Wits only are ordinarily ſubject to ſay what is impious or obſcene. *Homer* and *Virgil* were never guilty in this kind, they were ſweet and virtuous as Philoſophers; the Muſes of true Poets are as chaſte as *Veſtals.*

X.

FOR no other end is *Poetry* delightful, than that it may be profitable. Pleaſure is only the means by which the Profit is convey'd; and all *Poetry*, when 'tis perfect, ought of neceſſity to be a publick Leſſon of good Manners for the Inſtruction of the World. Heroick *Poeſie* propoſes the Example of great Virtues, and great Vices, to excite Men to abhor theſe, and to be in love with the other: it gives us an Eſteem for *Achilles* in *Homer*, and Contempt for *Therſites*: it begets in us a Veneration for the Piety of *Æneas* in *Virgil*, and Horrour for the Profaneneſs of *Mezentius*. Tragedy rectifies the uſe of Paſſions, by moderating our Fear, and our Pity, which are Obſtacles of Virtue; it lets Men ſee that Vice never eſcapes unpuniſh'd, when it repreſents *Ægyſthus* in the *Electra* of *Sophocles*, puniſh'd after the Ten years Enjoyment of his Crime. It teaches us, that the Favours of Fortune, and the Grandeurs of the World, are not always true Goods, when it ſhews on the

Theatre

Theatre a Queen ſo unhappy as *Hecuba* deploring with that pathetick Air her Misfortunes in *Euripides*. Comedy, which is an Image of common Converſation, corrects the publick Vices, by letting us ſee how ridiculous they are in particulars. *Ariſtophanes* does not mock at the fooliſh Vanity of *Praxagora* (in his *Parliament of Women*) but to cure the Vanity of the other *Athenian* Women; and it was only to teach the *Roman* Soldiers in what conſiſted true Valour, that *Plautus* expos'd in publick the Extravagance of falſe Bravery in his Braggadocio Captain, in that Comedy of the *Glorious Soldier*.

XI.

BUT becauſe *Poetry* is only profitable ſo far as it is delightful, 'tis of greateſt Importance in this Art to pleaſe; the onely certain way to pleaſe, is by Rules: theſe therefore are to be eſtabliſhed, that a Poet may not be left to confound all things, imitating thoſe Extravagances which *Horace* ſo much blames; that is to ſay, by joining things naturally

naturally incompatible, *mixing Tygers with Lambs, Birds with Serpents, to make one Body of different Species, and thereby authorize Fancies more indigeſted than the Dreams of ſick men*; for unleſs a man adhere to Principles, he is obnoxious to all Extravagances and Abſurdities imaginable: unleſs he go by Rule, he ſlips at every ſtep towards Wit, and falls into Errours as often as he ſets out. Into what Enormities hath *Petrarch* run in his *Africa*; *Arioſto* in his *Orlando Furioſo*; Cavalier *Marino* in his *Adonis*, and all the other *Italians* who were ignorant of *Ariſtotle*'s Rules; and followed no other Guides but their own Genius and capricious Fancy: Truth is, the Wits of *Italy* were ſo prepoſſeſs'd in favour of the *Romantick Poetry* of *Pulci*, *Boyardo*, and *Arioſto*, that they regarded no other Rules than what the heat of their Genius inſpir'd. The firſt *Italian* Poet who let the World ſee that the Art was not altogether unknown to him, was *Giorgio Triſſino*, in his Poem of *Italy*, delivered from the *Goths*, under the Pontificats of *Leo* X. and *Clement* VIII. in this Poem appear'd ſome kind of imitation of *Homer*'s *Ilias*. This Model was fol-

followed with ſucceſs by *Taſſo* in his *Hieruſalem delivered*; though one *Oliviero* had eſſay'd the ſame before him, but not ſo happily; in his Poem of *Germany*, *Victorius*, *Madius*, *Robertellus*, and after them *Caſtelvetro*, and *Picolomini*, were the firſt that made *Europe* acquainted with *Ariſtotle*'s Rules, which were brought over by the *Grecians* from *Conſtantinople* into *Italy*: and theſe were followed by *Beni*, *Minturno*, *Ricobon*, *Vida*, *Gallutio*, and many others.

XII.

Ariſtotle drew the Platform of theſe Rules from the Poems of *Homer*, and other Poets of his time, by the Reflections he had a long time made on their Works. I pretend not by a long Diſcourſe to juſtifie the neceſſity, the juſtneſs, and the truth of theſe Rules; nor to make an Hiſtory of *Ariſtotle*'s Treatiſe of *Poeſie*; or examine whether it is compleat, which many others have done, all theſe things I ſuppoſe: only I affirm, That theſe Rules well conſidered, one ſhall find them made only to reduce

reduce Nature into method, to trace it ſtep by ſtep, and not ſuffer the leaſt mark of it to eſcape us. 'Tis only by theſe Rules that the veriſimility in Fictions is maintained, which is the Soul of *Poeſie*. For unleſs there be the *unity* of *Place*, of *Time*, and of the *Action* in the great Poems, there can be no *veriſimility*. In fine, 'tis by theſe Rules that all becomes juſt, proportionate, and natural; for they are founded upon *good Senſe*, and *ſound Reaſon*, rather than on Authority and Example. *Horace*'s Book of *Poeſie*, which is but an interpretation of that of *Ariſtotle*, diſcovers ſufficiently the neceſſity of being ſubject to Rules, by the ridiculous Abſurdities one is apt to fall into, who follows only his Fancy; for though *Poeſie* be the effect of *Fancy*, yet if this *Fancy* be not regulated, 'tis a meer *Caprice*, not capable of producing any thing reaſonable.

XIII. But

XIII.

BUT if the Genius muſt indiſpenſibly be ſubjected to the ſervitude of Rules, 'twill not eaſily be decided whether *Art* or *Nature* contributes more to *Poetry*; 'tis one of thoſe queſtions unreſolv'd, which might be proper for a Declamation, and the Deciſion is of ſmall importance: it ſuffices that we know both the one and the other are of that moment, that none can attain to any ſoveraign perfection in *Poetry*, if he be defective in either: So that both (ſaith *Horace*) muſt mutually aſſiſt each other, and conſpire to make a *Poet* accompliſh'd. But though Nature be of little value without the help of Art, yet we may approve of *Quintilian*'s Opinion, who believ'd that *Art* did leſs contribute to that perfection, than *Nature*. And by the Compariſon that *Longinus* makes betwixt *Apollonius* and *Homer*, *Eratoſthenes* and *Archilochus*, *Bacchilides*, and *Pindar*, *Ion*, and *Sophocles*, the former of all which never trangreſſed againſt the Rules of *Art*, whereas theſe other did;

did; it appears that the advantage of Wit is always prefer'd before that of Art.

XIV.

'TIS not enough to have a *Genius*; one muſt know that he has it, and be ſure by the experience he ought to have of it: and he muſt know well of what it is moſt capable, and of what it is not, leſt he *force* it contrary to the Precept of *Horace*: which yet cannot be known without a long time making reflections on himſelf: And though *Nature* is always ready to diſcover it ſelf, yet we are not to rely on that, but ſtudy it with great attention, to learn its *ſtrength*. There are univerſal *Genius*'s capable of all things by the immenſity of their *Wit*; as *Horace* and *Virgil*, and there are others that are limited. *Demetrius Phalereus* ſays, That *Archilochus* had not that *Greatneſs of Soul* proper for an *Heroick Poem*, which *Homer* was endu'd withal. *Anacreon*, whoſe *delicacy* of *Wit* was *admirable*, had not that *loftineſs*. *Propertius* affirms

firms of himſelf, That *he was not fit to ſing the Wars of* Auguſtus, *nor deſcribe the Genealogy of* Cæſar. *Horace* peradventure, by the ſtrength of his *Genius*, might have been capable of a *great Poem*, if his inclination and nature had not determined him to Lyrick Verſe. *Fracaſtorius*, who with ſo good ſucceſs writ his *Syphilis*, the moſt excellent Poem in Latin Verſe that theſe latter Ages has produc'd in *Italy*, and which is writ in imitation of *Virgil*'s *Georgicks*, was not ſo happy in his Epick Poem of *Joſeph* Viceroy of *Egypt*, a fragment whereof is extant; for this Poem is of a poor Genius, and low Character. *Ronſard*, who had a Talent for Lyrick Verſe in *Scaliger*'s Opinion, and who got Reputation by his Odes, fell ſhort extreamly in his *Franciad*, which is dry and barren throughout, and has nothing of an *Heroick Ayre* in it.

XV. But

XV.

BUT 'tis not ſo much to diſcover its ſtrength, that we muſt know our Genius, as that we may be diligent to form it by the help of Art, and not go aſtray in the way we take to bring it to perfection. 'Twas thus that *Horace*, whoſe *Genius* was capable of all things, chiefly applied himſelf to Satyr, by the inclination of his Natural *Gaiety*, which made him *rally* ſo pleaſantly on all occaſions. He had found in his Nature the ſeeds of this Character, which he afterwards cultivated with ſo much ſucceſs: And what loftineſs he found in his Nature, he confined to *Lyrick Poeſie*, for which he had an inclination. For tho' he had a Genius for greater things, yet by a certain love of eaſe, which was natural to him, he only applied himſelf to the little, for that he was not of an humour to ſtrain, or give himſelf trouble. *Ovid* finding in himſelf a capacity of expreſſing things naturally, left Heroick Verſe to write Elegies, in which he was more happy. *Virgil*, who perceiv'd himſelf

ſelf more ſtrong, and had a greater elevation of Soul, took Trumpet in hand, and raiſed himſelf by his Eclogues, and Georgicks, as by ſo many ſteps to the moſt ſublime Character of Heroick Verſe. 'Tis therefore by reflecting a long time on a man's ſelf, and by continual ſtudy of his Nature, join'd with the care and exerciſe of Compoſing, that he does accompliſh his *Genius*, and arrives to perfection.

XVI.

NOthing can more contribute to this Perfection, than a *Judgment* proportion'd to the *Wit*; for, the greater that the Wit is, and the more ſtrength and vigour that the imagination has to form theſe Idea's that enrich *Poeſie*, the more Wiſdom and Diſcretion is requiſite to moderate that heat, and govern its natural *Fury*. For Reaſon ought to be much ſtronger than the Fancy, to diſcern how far the Tranſports may be carried. 'Tis a great Talent to forbear ſpeaking all one thinks, and to leave ſomething for others to employ their Thoughts.

'Tis not ordinarily known how far matters ſhould be carried; a man of an accompliſh'd Genius ſtops regularly where he ought to ſtop, and retrenches boldly what ought to be omitted. 'Tis a great fault not to leave a thing when 'tis well, for which *Apelles* ſo much blam'd *Protogenes*. This moderation is the character of a great Wit, the Vulgar underſtand it not; and (whatever is alledg'd to the contrary) never any, ſave *Homer* and *Virgil*, had the diſcretion to leave a thing when 'twas well.

XVII.

THis Natural Diſcernment, which is neceſſary for a Poet to accompliſh him, ought it ſelf to be improv'd, and to attain to perfection by the miniſtry of Art, without which, nothing exact or regular can be produc'd. A Poet that deſigns to write nothing but what is juſt and accurate, above all things ought to apply himſelf with great attention to the precepts of *Ariſtotle*, as the beſt Maſter that ever writ of this Art; but becauſe his Method is nothing exact, though his mat-

ter be ſolid, I rather attend his Rules, than the order in which he has left them. *Horace*, who was the firſt Interpreter of *Ariſtotle*, in his Book on this Subject, has obſerv'd as little method, becauſe peradventure it was writ in an Epiſtle, whoſe Character ought to be free, and without conſtraint. This is what may be ſaid in general of ſubjecting the Wit to Rules of Art, which the *Italian* and *Spaniſh* Poets ſcarce ever were acquainted withal: Hereafter follows what may be obſerv'd in particular of this Art.

XVIII.

THE Art of *Poetry* in general comprehends the matters of which a Poet treats, and the manner in which he handles them; the *invention*, the *contrivance*, the *deſign*, the *proportion* and *ſymmetry* of parts, the *general diſpoſition* of matters, and whatever regards the *invention*, belong to the matters of which this Art ought to treat. The *Fable*, the *Manners*, the *Sentiments*, the *Words*, the *Figures*, the *Numbers*, the *Har-*

mony, the *Verſification* regard the *manner* in which the *matters* are to be handled: So that the Art is (as it were) the *Inſtrument* of the Genius, becauſe it contains eſſentially all the different parts which are employ'd in the management. So that thoſe who are furniſh'd with a naked Wit only, and who, to be great Poets, relye principally on their Fancy, as Cavalier *Marino* among the *Italians*, *Theophile* among the *French*; and thoſe likewiſe who place the eſſence of *Poetry* in big and pompous words, as *Statius* among the *Latins*, and *Du Bartas* among the *French*, are much miſtaken in their account, when they aſpire to the glory of *Poetry* by ſuch feeble means.

XIX.

AMong the particulars of this Art, the *Subject* and *Deſign* ought to have the firſt place, becauſe it is, as it were, the firſt production of the Wit; and the deſign in a Poem is, what they call the *Ordonnance* in a Picture. The great

great Painters only are capable of a great deſign in their draughts, ſuch as a *Raphael*, a *Julius Romanus*, a *Pouſſin*, and only great Poets are capable of a great Subject in their *Poetry*. An indifferent Wit may form a vaſt deſign in his Imagination, but it muſt be an extraordinary Genius that can work this deſign, and faſhion it according to juſtneſs and proportion. For, 'tis neceſſary that the ſame Spirit reign throughout, that all contribute to the ſame end, and that all the parts bear a ſecret relation to each other, all depend on this relation and alliance; and this general deſign is nothing elſe but the *Form* which a Poet gives to his Work. This alſo is the moſt difficult part, being the effect of an accompliſh'd Judgment; and becauſe Judgment is not the ordinary Talent of the *French*, 'tis generally in the contrivance of their deſign that their *Poets* are defective, and nothing is more rare among them, than a deſign that is great, juſt, and well conceiv'd. They pretend to be more happy in the Talents of Wit and Fancy, as likewiſe the *Italians*. The moſt perfect deſign of all modern *Poems*, is that of *Taſſo*, nothing more com-

plete has appear'd in *Italy*, though great faults are in the conduct of it. And the moſt judicious, the moſt admirable, the moſt perfect deſign of all Antiquity, is that of *Virgil* in his *Æneids*; all there is great and noble, all proportionable to the *Subject*, which is the eſtabliſhment of the Empire of *Rome*, to the *Heroe* who is *Æneas*, to the glory of *Auguſtus* and the *Romans*, for whom it was compos'd. Nothing is weak or defective in the *execution*, all there is happy, all is juſt, all is perfect. But the ſovereign perfection of a deſign, in the opinion of *Horace*, is to be ſimple, and that all turn on the ſame Centre. Which is ſo true, that even in little things, that is to ſay, in an *Eclogue*, *Elegy*, *Song*, or *Epigram*, and in the meaneſt Compoſitions, there ought to be a juſt caſt, and that all of it turn on the ſame point. *Ovid* did much Violence to himſelf to unite his *Metamorphoſes*, and cloſe them in one deſign, in which he was not altogether ſo happy, as afterwards in his Elegies, where well nigh always one may find a certain *Turn*, which binds the Deſign, and makes thereof a Work that is juſt by the dependance and relation of its parts.

parts. In this the ancient Poets were always more exact than the modern; for moſt of the Modern expreſs their Thoughts *higgle piggle*, without any Order or Connexion. If there be deſign, 'tis never with that ſcrupulous Unity, which is the principal Virtue that ſhould be predominant, to make it juſt and complete. I know there are a kind of Works, which, by the Quality of their Character, ought to be writ with a free Air, without other deſign than that of writing things naturally, and without conſtraint, ſuch are the Hymns of *Orpheus*, *Homer*, *Callimachus*; and ſuch are certain Odes of *Pindar*, *Anacreon*, and *Horace*, that have no other Rule but Enthuſiaſm; and ſuch likewiſe are the moſt part of the Elegies of *Tibullus* and *Propertius*. But it muſt be granted, that theſe are not the beſt and moſt beautiful; and who reflects on the Elegies of *Ovid*, ſhall always there perceive a ſecret turn which makes the deſign, and this is ordinarily the principal Beauty in theſe little Works of Verſe, as may be ſeen in moſt Epigrams of the Anthology, in thoſe of *Catullus*, in the *correct* Odes of *Horace*, and in the Phaleuſi-

acks of *Bonefons*, who within this laſt Age, has writ in Latine Verſe with all the Softneſs and Delicacy poſſible. Thus every ſort of *Poeſie* ought to have its proportionable Deſign; a great Deſign, in great Poems; and in little, a little Deſign: But of this the ordinary Wits know nothing; their Works, which generally are meer Productions of Imagination, have ſcarce ever any Deſign, unleſs it be by chance. It muſt be the Work of an accompliſh'd Genius, to cloſe his Thoughts in a Deſign, whence reſults an Agreement and Proportion of parts, that makes the Harmony perfect.

XX.

THE *Deſign* of a Poem muſt conſiſt of two Parts, of Truth, and of Fiction; Truth is the Foundation, Fiction makes the Accompliſhment. And *Ariſtotle* calls the mixture of theſe two, the *Conſtitution of things:* or the *Fable*, which is no other than the Subject of a Poem, as the Deſign or Fable of the *Andria* in *Terence*, are the Loves of *Pamphilus* and *Glycerium*. The Fable of

of *Hippolitus* in *Euripides*, is the Paſſion of *Phædra* for her Son-in-law; this Paſſion cauſes the Misfortunes of *Hippolitus*, and the Diſorders of *Theſeus*'s Houſe. The Fable of *Homer*'s *Iliad* is the Anger of *Achilles*, who by his preſence, or by his abſence from the *Grecian* Army, determines the good or ill ſucceſs of all his party; the Anger of this Prince, which proceeds of the diſcontent he received from *Agamemnon*, is the Truth of the Hiſtory, which is adorn'd with all the *Epiſodes* and Variety of Adventures that enrich this Poem: and the Poet fills not his Poem with that Variety of extraordinary Events, but to give delight; which he could never perform, if he had nothing to ſay but Truth; and he would never be regarded, if all were fabulous: therefore *Hiſtory* and *Fiction* muſt neceſſarily enter the Compoſition of the *Subject*.

XXI.

XXI.

ARiſtotle divides the Fable, which ſerves for Argument to a Poem, into ſimple and compound. The ſimple is that which hath no Change of Fortune, as is the *Prometheus* of *Æſchylus*, and the *Hercules* of *Seneca*. The compound Fable is that which hath a turn from bad Fortune to good, or from good to bad, as the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles*. And the Contrivance of each Fable muſt have two parts, the *Intrigue*, and the *Diſcovery*. The Intrigue embroyls matters, caſting Troubles and Confuſion among the Affairs. The Diſcovery remits all into a Calm again. Whatever goes before the Change of Fortune, is called the Intrigue; all that makes the Change, or follows it, is the Diſcovery. The Intrigue in the *Andromache* of *Euripides*, is, That this Princeſs, after ſhe had loſt *Hector* her Huſband, and ſeen her Father *Priam* murther'd, the chief City of his Kingdom burnt, became a Slave to *Neoptolemus*. *Hermione*, the Wife of this Prince, prick'd

prick'd with Jealouſie againſt *Andromache*, was minded to kill her. *Menelaus* Father of *Hermione*, cauſes her with her Son *Aſtyanax* to be dragg'd to Execution; this is the *Intrigue*. Now ſhe is reſcu'd from Death by *Tethys* and *Peleus*, who prefer the Son to be King of the *Moloſſians*, and the Mother to be Queen by a Marriage with *Helenus*; this is the *Diſcovery*. And every Fable muſt have theſe two Parts, to be the Subject of a juſt Poem. Thus *Æneas* chac'd from his Country, ſpoil'd of all that he poſſeſs'd, beaten by Tempeſts, wandering from Coaſt to Coaſt, deſtitute of all Succours, perſecuted by *Juno*, and the other Deities of her *Cabal*; After all theſe Diſgraces, became the Founder of the greateſt Monarchy in the World. This is the Fable of the *Æneid* with its Intrigue, and its Diſcovery. And it is to be obſerv'd, that only by this Change of Fortune the Fable pleaſes, and has its Effect, in which the ſimple Fable is defective in *Ariſtotle*'s Opinion, becauſe it wants Variety.

XXII.

XXII.

FA*ble* is ſo eſſential to *Poetry*, that there is no *Poetry* without it; it is the form and the diſtinction; for the *Fable* to a *Poem*, is what the *Figure* is to *Marble* in a *Statue*: but the *Fable*, beſides the two parts already mention'd that compoſe it, muſt yet have two qualities to be perfect; it muſt be *admirable*, and it muſt be *probable*. By the firſt of theſe *qualities* it becomes worthy of *admiration*: and by the ſecond it becomes worthy of belief. However *admirable* the *Fable* be, it can have no effect unleſs it be *probable*. The truth is, it ſtrikes the *Soul*, becauſe it is extraordinary, but it never enters, nor can make any impreſſion, by reaſon it appears *incredible*. Probability alone is too faint and dull for *Poetry*, and what is only *admirable* is too *dazling*. 'Tis true, whatever appears incredible, is ſtrongly *reliſh'd* by the curioſity of the People; for the People, ſaith *Syneſius*, deſpiſes whatever ſeems common and ordinary; they love nothing but what is *prodigious*,

ous, but the *Wiſe* cannot endure what is incredible; the publick being compos'd of the one and the other, is delighted with what is admirable, ſo be, it is credible: therefore it moſt imports to know ſo to mingle theſe in ſuch a juſt Temperament as may pleaſe the Fancy without ſhocking the Reaſon; but to learn this Secret, it muſt be known what it is to be *admirable*, and what it is to be *probable*.

XXIII.

THE *admirable* is all that which is againſt the ordinary courſe of Nature. The *probable* is what ever ſuits with common Opinion. The changing of *Niobe* into a Stone, is an Event that holds of the *admirable*; yet this becomes *probable*, when a *Deity*, to whoſe power this change was poſſible, is engag'd. *Æneas*, in the Twelfth Book of the *Æneid*, *lifts, by himſelf, a ſtone, that Ten Men could ſcarce remove*; this Prodigy is made *probable* by the aſſiſtance of the *Gods* that took his part againſt *Turnus*. But moſt part of thoſe that make Verſe, by too great

great a Paſſion they have to create *Admiration*, take not ſufficient *care* to temper it with *probability*. Againſt this Rock moſt ordinarily fall the *Poets*, who are too eaſily carried to ſay *incredible things*, that they may be *admirable*. Thus *Homer*, in the Fifteenth Book of his *Iliad*, makes *Stentor*'s Voice *more loud than that of Fifty men*. And *Virgil* makes a *Bough of Gold to grow on a Tree*, in the Sixth of his *Æneids*. And *Boreas* demands of *Æolus*, in the *Argonauticks* of *Valerius Flaccus*, the permiſſion to deſtroy the Ship of the *Argonautes*, where his two Sons *Zethus* and *Calais* were embark'd. Almoſt all the ancient *Poets*, however judicious otherwiſe, have been guilty of this Fault; not to ſpeak of the modern, and eſpecially *Arioſto*, for that *Hippogriſe* or *winged Horſe* of *Roger*, *thoſe Giants*, *thoſe Monſters*, *that wonderful Ring of Angelica*; which renders her inviſible, the Combats of *Marfiſa*, *Bradamante*, and *Olympia*, and all the *bravery* of that *Sex*, which he makes *valiant* in *War*, contrary to their natural *timidity*; thoſe *Viſions*, *Enchantments*, and *prodigious Adventures*, are like the *vain imaginations of a ſick Brain*, and are pitied by all men

men of *Senſe*, becauſe they have no colour of *likelihood.* The ſame Judgment muſt be pronounc'd of the other *Italian* and *Spaniſh Poets*, who ſuffer their Wits to ramble in the *Romantick* way: 'tis too great Honour to call them Poets, they are for the moſt part but *Rhimeſters.*

XXIV.

BEſides, that *probability* ſerves to give credit to whatever *Poeſie* has the moſt fabulous; it ſerves alſo to give, to whatever the *Poet* ſaith, a greater *luſtre* and *air* of *Perfection*, than *Truth* it ſelf can do, though *probability* is but the Copy. For *Truth* repreſents Things only as they are, but *probability* renders them as they ought to be. *Truth* is well nigh always *defective*, by the mixture of particular Conditions that compoſe it. Nothing is brought into the World that is not remote from the *perfection* of its *Idea* from the very *birth.* *Originals* and *Models* are to be ſearch'd for in *probability*, and in the *univerſal principles* of Things, where nothing that is *material* and

and *ſingular* enters to corrupt them; for this Reaſon the Portracts of *Hiſtory* are leſs perfect than the Portracts of *Poeſie*; and *Sophocles* who in his *Tragedies* repreſents *Men* as they *ought to be*, is, in the Opinion of *Ariſtotle*, to be prefer'd before *Euripides*, who repreſents Men as *really* they *are*; and *Horace* makes leſs account of the *Leſſons* of *Crantor* and *Chryſippus*, for the manners, than of thoſe of *Homer*.

XXV.

AFter the *Deſign* or *Fable*, *Ariſtotle* places the *Manners* for the ſecond Part; he calls the *Manners* the *Cauſe* of the *Action*, for it is from theſe that a Man begins to *Act*. *Achilles* retires from the *Grecian* Army in *Homer*, becauſe he is *diſcontent*. *Æneas* in *Virgil* carries his gods into *Italy*, becauſe he is *pious*. *Medea* kills her Children in *Seneca*, becauſe ſhe is *revengeful*; ſo the *Manners* are, as it were, the *firſt Springs* of all Humane *Actions*. The Painter draws *Faces* by their Features; but the Poet repreſents the *Minds* of Men by their *Manners*:

and

and the moſt general Rule for painting the *Manners*, is to exhibit every perſon in his proper *Character*. A *Slave*, with baſe Thoughts, and ſervile Inclinations. A *Prince*, with a liberal Heart, and air of Majeſty. A *Soldier*, fierce, inſolent, ſurly, inconſtant. An *old Man*, covetous, wary, jealous. 'Tis in deſcribing the *Manners* that *Terence* triumphed over all the Poets of his time, in *Varro*'s Opinion, for his perſons are never found out of their *Characters*. He obſerves their *Manners* in all the Niceties and Rigours of *decorum*, which *Homer* himſelf has not always done, as ſome pretend. *Longinus* cannot endure the *Wounds*, the *Adulteries*, the *Hatred*, and all the other Weakneſſes to which he makes the gods obnoxious, contrary to their *Character*. *Philoſtratus* finds much to object againſt his portracts; but *Juſtin Martyr* excuſes him, alledging, That he took theſe Notions from *Orpheus*, and that he had follow'd the Opinion that publickly prevail'd in thoſe days. However it be, it may be granted, that *Homer* has not treated the Gods with all the Reſpect due to their condition. *Ariſtotle* condemns *Euripides* for introducing

ducing *Menalippa* to ſpeak too much like a *Philoſopher of the Sect of* Anaxagoras, whoſe Opinions were then new in his time. *Theon* the *Sophiſt* cannot endure the unſeaſonable Diſcourſes of *Hecuba* on her Misfortunes, in the ſame Author. *Sophocles* makes *Oedipus* too weak and low-ſpirited in his Exile, after he had beſtow'd on him that *Character* of Conſtancy and Reſolution before his Diſgrace. *Seneca*, for his part, knows nothing of the *Manners*. He is a fine Speaker, who is eternally uttering *pretty Sayings*, but is in no wiſe *Natural* in what he ſpeaks, and whatever perſons he makes to ſpeak, they always have the Meen of Actors. The *Angelica* of *Arioſto* is too immodeſt. The *Armida* of *Taſſo* is too free and impudent; theſe two *Poets* rob Women of their *Character*, which is Modeſty. *Rinaldo* is ſoft and effeminate in the one, *Orlando* is too tender and paſſionate in the other. Theſe weakneſſes in no wiſe agree with *Heroes*; they are degraded from the *Nobleneſs* of their Condition, to make them guilty of Folly. The ſovereign Rule for treating of *Manners*, is to copy them after *Nature*, and above all,

to

to ſtudy well the *Heart of Man*, to know how to diſtinguiſh all its *Motions*. 'Tis this which none are acquainted with: The *Heart* of *Man* is an *Abyſs*, where none can ſound the bottom: It is a *Myſtery*, which the moſt quick-ſighted cannot pierce into, and in which the moſt cunning are miſtaken; at the worſt the *Poet* is oblig'd to ſpeak of *Manners* according to the common Opinion. *Ajax* muſt be repreſented *grum*, as *Sophocles*; *Polyxena* and *Iphigenia generous*, as *Euripides* has repreſented them. Finally, the *Manners* muſt be proportionable to the *Age*, to the *Sex*, to the *Quality*, to the *Employment*, and to the *Fortune* of the perſons: and it is particularly in the Second Book of *Ariſtotle's Rhetorick*, and in *Horace's* Book of *Poetry*, that this Secret may be learn'd; whatever agrees not with his *principles*, is falſe: Nothing tolerable can be perform'd in *Poetry* without this *Knowledge*, and with it all becomes *admirable*. And *Horace* in that place of his Book of *Poetry*, where he makes diſtinction of Ages to draw their portracts, affirms, That 'tis only by the *repreſentation of Manners* that any can have ſucceſs on the *Stage*; for there all is *frivolous*, if the *Manners* be not obſerv'd.

XXVI.

THE third part of the Art conſiſts in the *Thoughts* or *Sentiments*, which are properly the expreſſions of the *Manners*, as *Words* are the expreſſions of the *Thoughts*. *Their office*, ſaith *Ariſtotle*, *is to approve or diſlike, to ſtir or to calm the paſſions, to magnifie or diminiſh things.* Thus *Polyxena* in the *Hecuba* of *Euripides*, cannot approve the *Thoughts* of her Mother, which directed her to throw her ſelf at the Feet of *Ulyſſes* to move him to pity, who demanded her in the name of the *Grecian* Army to be ſacrific'd, for Virtue inſpir'd this generous Princeſs with other *Sentiments*. 'Tis thus that *Drances* in *Virgil* amplifies (at the Council of King *Latinus*) the danger, the injuſtice, the ill conſequences of the War they wag'd with *Æneas*, being *fearful* and *cowardly*: and that *Turnus* confutes ſo ſtrongly the *Sentiments* of this Speaker, being himſelf valiant, and a deſpiſer of Dangers. *Thoughts* muſt not only be conformable to the *Perſons* to whom they are given, but likewiſe to the

the *Subject* treated of; that is to ſay, on great *Subjects* are required great *Thoughts*, as thoſe of *Evadne* in the *Suppliants* of *Euripides*; there this Queen, after the death of her Husband *Capaneus*, may be ſeen to expreſs all the extremity of her Grief, by force of a Sorrow, the moſt *generous* that ever was; her Affliction oppreſſes her, without extorting from her one word that betrays any thing of *weakneſs*. The *Greek* Poets are full of theſe great *Thoughts*: and it is much by this *greatneſs* of their *Sentiments*, that they are particularly *ſignaliz'd* in their Works. *Demetrius* and *Longinus* perpetually propoſe them for Models to thoſe who ſtudy the *ſublime Style*; and it is in theſe *great Originals* that our modern Poets ought to conſult *Nature*, to learn how to raiſe their *Wits*, and be *lofty*. We may flatter our ſelves with our *Wit*, and the *Genius* of our (the *French*) Nation; but our *Soul* is not enough exalted to frame *great Idea's*, we are buſied with *petty Subjects*, and by that means it is that we prove ſo cold in the *great*; and that in our Works ſcarce appears any ſhadow of that *ſublime Poeſie*, of which the ancient Poets

have left ſuch *excellent Models*, and above all *Homer* and *Virgil*; for *great Poetry* muſt be animated and ſuſtain'd by *great Thoughts*, and *great Sentiments*, but theſe we ordinarily want, either becauſe our *Wit* is too much limited, or becauſe we take not care to exerciſe on *important Matters*. Thus we are low on *high Subjects*. For example, how *feeble* are we, when we ſpeak of the Conqueſts of a *King*? our Poets make their Expreſſions ſwell, to ſupply the want of *noble Sentiments*: but it is not only the *Greatneſs* of the *Subjects*, and the *Thoughts* that give this *air* of *majeſty* to *Poetry*, there is likewiſe required *loſty Words*, and *noble Expreſſions*.

XXVII.

THE laſt part is the *Expreſſion*, and whatever regards the *Language*; it muſt have five *qualities*, to have all the Perfection *Poetry* demands: it muſt be *apt*, *clear*, *natural*, *ſplendid*, and *numerous*. The *Language* muſt in the firſt place be *apt*, and have nothing *impure* or *barbarous*: for though one may ſpeak what

what is *great*, *noble*, and *admirable*, all is deſpicable and odious, if the *purity* be wanting: the greateſt *Thoughts* in the World have not any *Grace*, if the *conſtruction* be defective. This *purity* of Writing is of late ſo ſtrongly eſtabliſhed among the *French*, that he muſt be very *hardy*, that will make *Verſe* in an *Age* ſo *delicate*, unleſs he underſtand the *Tongue* perfectly. Secondly, the *Language* muſt be *clear*, that it may be *intelligible*, for one of the greateſt Faults in Diſcourſe is *obſcurity:* in this *Camoens*, whom the *Portugueſe* call their *Virgil*, is extreamly *blameable*; for his *Verſe* are ſo *obſcure*, that they may paſs for *Myſteries:* and the *Thoughts* of *Dante* are ſo *profound*, that much *Art* is requir'd to dive into them. *Poetry* demands a more *clear Air*, and what is leſs *incomprehenſible.* The third *quality* is, that it be *natural*, without *affectation*, according to Rules of *decorum*, and *good ſenſe. Studied Phraſes*, a too *florid Style*, *fine Words*, *Terms ſtrain'd and remote*, and all *extraordinary Expreſſions* are *inſupportable* to the *true Poeſie*; only *Simplicity* pleaſes, provided it be *ſuſtain'd* with *Greatneſs* and *Majeſty:* but this *Simplicity* is not

known, except by great Souls, the little *Wits* underſtand nothing of it; 'tis the *Maſter-piece* of *Poeſie*, and the *Character* of *Homer* and *Virgil*. The Ignorant hunt after *Wit*, and fine *Thoughts*, becauſe they are ignorant. The *Language* muſt be *lofty* and *ſplendid*, which is the fourth *quality*, for the *common* and ordinary *terms* are not proper for a Poet, he muſt uſe words that partake nothing of the *baſe* and *vulgar*, they muſt be *noble* and *magnificent*; the Expreſſions *ſtrong*, the Colours *lively*, the Draughts *bold*: his Diſcourſe muſt be ſuch as may equal the greatneſs of the *Idea's* of a *Workman*, who is the Creator of his *Work*. The fifth *quality*, is that it be *numerous*, to uphold that *greatneſs* and *air of majeſty* which *reigns* throughout in *Poeſie*, and to expreſs all the *force* and *dignity* of the *great things* it ſpeaks: *terms* that go off roundly from the Mouth, and that fill the Ears, are ſufficient to render all *admirable*, as *Poeſie* requires. But this is not enough that the Expreſſions be *ſtately* and *great*, there muſt likewiſe be *heat* and *vehemence*: and above all, there muſt *ſhine* throughout the Diſcourſe a certain *grace* and *delicacy*, which

which makes the principal *Ornament*, and moſt univerſal *Beauty*.

XXVIII.

IT may be affirm'd, that never Perſon in any *Language* poſſeſs'd all theſe *qualities* in ſuch eminent degree, as *Homer*; he is the firſt *Model* a Poet muſt propoſe to himſelf to write as he ought; for never perſon writ more *purely*, nor more *naturally* than he: 'tis he alone that ever found the *ſecret* of joyning to the *purity* of *Style* all the *ſublimity* and *greatneſs* that *Heroick Poeſie* is capable of; for this reaſon, *Longinus* always propoſes him as the moſt juſt and exact Rule for the *ſublime Style*. It was formerly on this Original, that *Euphranor* form'd his *Idea* for drawing the *Image* of *Jupiter*, for that he might be more ſucceſsful therein, he travell'd to *Athens* to conſult a Profeſſor that read *Homer* to his Scholars; upon the deſcription the Poet gives in the Firſt Book of his *Iliad*, of a *Jupiter* with *black Eye-brows, a brow cover'd with Clouds*, and a *Head environ'd* with all that *majeſty* has moſt *terrible*, this Painter

Painter made a Portract that after was the *Wonder* of his *Age*, as *Appion* the *Grammarian* has reported. The ſame hapned to *Phidias* in that *admirable Statue* of *Jupiter* he made, after the *Model* he found in the ſame place in *Homer*, as *Euſtathius* affirms. And one of the moſt famous Painters of this *Age*, made *Homer* be read to him to heighten his Fancy, when he diſpos'd himſelf to draw. The ſame judgment is to be made of the *Expreſſions* of *Virgil*, eſpecially in his *Georgicks*.

XXIX.

THE *loftineſs* of *Expreſſion* is ſo important, that for the attaining it, 'tis not enough to propoſe *Homer* and *Virgil*, it muſt be ſearch'd in *Pindar*, in *Sophocles*, in *Euripides*; and it muſt be had in *grave* and *ſerious Subjects*, that, of themſelves, are capable to furniſh with *great Thoughts*, as the *great Thoughts* are capable to furniſh with *noble Expreſſions*. *But the way to heighten Diſcourſe*, ſaith *Ariſtotle*, *is to make good uſe of* Metaphors, *and to underſtand perfectly their Nature*,

Nature, that they may not be abus'd: and he adds in the ſame place, *That this diſcernment is the mark of an excellent* Wit; *and becauſe,* as ſaith *Quintilian, this* loftineſs *which is aimed at by the* boldneſs *of a* Metaphor, *is* dangerous, *inſomuch that it comes nigh to* Raſhneſs; *Ariſtotle* muſt be conſulted on this matter, to employ them with Diſcretion, as *Virgil* has done: who, treating of *Bees,* in the Fourth Book of his *Georgicks,* that he might heighten the *meanneſs* of his *Subject,* ſpeaks not of them but in *Metaphorical Terms,* of a *Court,* of *Legions,* of *Armies,* of *Combats, pitch'd Fields, Kings, Captains, Souldiers:* and by this *admirable Art,* forms a *noble Image* of the *loweſt Subject*; for after all, they are ſtill but *Flies.* Finally, the Poet muſt above all things know what *Eloquence* has of *Art* and *Method* for the uſe of *Figures:* for it is only by the *Figures* that he gives *force* to the Paſſions, *luſtre* to the Diſcourſes, *weight* to the Reaſons, and makes *delightful* all he ſpeaks. 'Tis only by the moſt lively *Figures* of *Eloquence* that all the *Emotions* of the *Soul* become fervent and paſſi-

Poet. c. 2. 22.

Lib. 8. cap. 6.

paſſionate: *Nature* muſt be the onely Guide that can be propos'd in the uſe of theſe *Figures* and *Metaphors*, and muſt therefore be well underſtood, that it may be trac'd and follow'd without miſtake; for no Portraicts can be drawn that have *Reſemblance* without it, and all the *Images* that *Poetry* employs in expreſſing it ſelf, are falſe, unleſs they be *natural*.

XXX.

BUT this *ſublime* Stile is the *Rock* to the mean *Wits*: they fly out in too *vaſt* and *boiſterous Terms*, from what is *natural*, when they endeavour to be *high* and *lofty*. For this *haughty* and *pompous* kind of *Speech* becomes *vain* and *cold*, if not ſupported with *great Thoughts*; and the *great Words* that are indiſcreetly *affected* to heighten the *Diſcourſe*, for the moſt part only make a *Noiſe*. The Emperor *Nero*, who had the *Worm* in his Head, and conceited himſelf a *Wit*, ran into this *Character* with that Extravagance, that he became a Subject of *Raillery* to the *Satyriſts* of his Time. *Statius*,

us, who had a better *Genius*, would imitate this kind of writing in his Poems, by an *Affectation* of *great* Words, and *ſwelling* Expreſſions: but ſeeing he *ſwells* into *Fuſtian*, he fills the Ears without touching the Heart; and all thoſe univerſally, who in the *decline* of the Empire affected to be *lofty*, and wanted *Wit*, by a too great *Boldneſs* of *Language*, became *obſcure*, as *Perſius* in his *Satyres*: or *cold* and *flat*, as *Valerius Flaccus* in his *Argonauticks*: or fell into the *Impropricty*, as *Sidonius Apollinaris*, and the others. For the moſt eſſential Vertue of *Speech*, next to the *Clearneſs* and *Perſpicuity*, is, that it be *chaſte* and *modeſt*, as *Demetrius Phalerius* obſerves; *There muſt be* (ſaith he) *a Proportion betwixt the Words and the things*: and nothing is more ridiculous, than to handle a *frivolous Subject* in a *ſublime Stile*; for whatſoever is diſproportionate, is either altogether *falſe*, or at the leaſt, is *trifling* and *childiſh*. This by *Socrates* is objected to the *Sophiſt* *Gorgias Leontinus*, whom he pleaſantly plays upon for affecting to ſpeak *petty* things with a *great* and *ſolemn Meen*. Moſt *French* Poets fall into this Vice, for want

Plut. Georg.

want of *Genius*; their Verſes where *Logick* is much neglected, moſt commonly, are either *Pedantary* or *Nonſenſe*. Sholud I cite Examples, there would be no end, *Dubartas* and *Ronſard*, who would heighten their Conceits with *great* Words after their Faſhion, *compounded* according to the manner of the *Greek*, and of which the *French* Tongue is not capable, were guilty of *Impropriety*, and made themſelves *barbarous*; who ſucceeded them, committed the ſame Fault. *Malherb* was the firſt that join'd *Purity* to the *lofty* Stile; but being the *Beginner*, he could not carry it to *Perfection*, there is good ſtore of *Proſe* amongſt his *Verſe*. *Theophile*, who follow'd him, by too great Affectation of the *eaſie* Stile, degenerated into *trifling* and *puerility*: the truth is, the Foundation of his *Character* was a *luxuriant* Fancy, rather than a *fruitful* Wit. The *Pharſale* of *Brebeuf* corrupted afterwards much of the Youth, who were *dazzled* at the *Pomp* of his Verſe. 'Tis true, they have *Splendour*: but after all, whatever ſeem'd *great* and *ſublime* in this Poem, when 'tis view'd near hand, will not paſs with the intelligent, but for

for a *falſe Luſtre* full of Affectation. The *ſmall Wits* were tranſported with the Noiſe this Poem made formerly, which at the bottom has nothing in it *natural.*

XXXI.

OF late ſome have fallen into another Extremity, by a too ſcrupulous Care of *Purity of Language:* they have begun to take from *Poeſie* all its *Nerves*, and all its *Majeſty*, by a too *timerous* Reſervedneſs, and *falſe Modeſty*, which ſome thought to make the *Character* of the *French* Tongue, by robbing it of all thoſe *wiſe and judicious Boldneſſes* that *Poeſie* demands: they would retrench, without reaſon, the Uſe of *Metaphors*, and of all thoſe *Figures* that give Life and Luſtre to the *Expreſſions:* and ſtudy to confine all the Excellency of this admirable Art within the Bounds of a *pure* and *correct* Diſcourſe, without expoſing it to the Danger of any *high* and *bold Flight.* The *Guſt* of the Age, which lov'd Purity; *the Women*, who naturally are modeſt,

modeſt, the *Court*, which then had ſcarce any Commerce with the *Great Men* of Antiquity, through their ordinary *Antipathy* to Learning, and the *general Ignorance* in the Perſons of Quality, gave *Reputation* to this way of Writing: But nothing more authorized it, than the Verſes of *Voiture* and *Sarazin*, the *Metamorphoſis* of *the Eyes of* Phillis *into Stars*, *the Temple of Death*, *the Eclogues of* Lane, and ſome other Works of that *Character*, that came abroad at that time with a ſucceſs which diſtinguiſh'd them from the *Vulgar*. In this way they were *polite*, and writ good *Senſe*; and it agreed with the *Guſt* of the Age, and was follow'd: and who ſucceeded therein, would make a new kind of *Refinement* in *Poetry*; as if the Art conſiſted onely in the *Purity* and *Exactneſs* of Language. This indeed pleaſed well, and was much to the Advantage of *Women* that had a mind to be *tampering* and *writing* in *Verſe*; they found it their Concern to give *Vogue* to this kind of Writing, of which they were as capable as the moſt part of Men; for all the *Secret* was no more but to make ſome little

tle *eaſie* Verſes, in which they were content, if they could cloſe ſome kind of *Delicateneſs* of *ſweet* and *paſſionate Thoughts*, which they made the *Eſſence* of *Poetry*. The ill fortune is, *Horace* was not of their mind; *It is not enough* (ſaith he) *to write with purity to make a Poet*: he muſt have other *Qualities*. But there are now *living*, Authors, of a more *ſtrong* and *noble Genius* than thoſe I have mention'd; who, at this day, let us ſee in their *Works*, that *Purity of Language* may be join'd with *Greatneſs of Thoughts*, and with all the *Elevation*, whereof *Heroick Poeſie* can be capable; but there is not in the *French* Tongue any Work, wherein is ſo much Poetry, as in the Poem of Saint *Louis*; yet the Author is not *reſerved* enough, he gives his *Wit* too much *Scope*, and his *Fancy* always carries him too far.

XXXII.

BUT examining well, one ſhall find that *Heroick Poetry* is not ſo much in uſe among the *French*, as ſome would perſwade us; either by the *application* of them to *little* and *frivolous Subjects*, or by a *natural difficulty* in them, which clogs and ſuffers them not to *riſe* in the *Matters* of which they treat: or by reaſon they want a *Genius* for that *Character* they ought to bear; or that, in effect, their *Models* are defective. He is but capable of very little, who governs himſelf, and is directed only by the *modern Poems*; whereas nothing *noble* and *ſublime* can be made without conſulting the *Ancients*. The greateſt *flights* of *Latin Poetry* are in ſome certain *excellent places* of *Virgil*'s *Georgicks* and every where in his *Æneid*, that are capable of great *Figures*. The *modern Latin* Poets afford but few; moſt whereof have only copied *Virgil*'s *Phraſes*, without expreſſing his *Spirit*. *Fracaſtorius*, *Vida*, Cardinal *Sadolet*, *Sannazarius*, have ſome *touches* of that *noble Air*, but not

not many: they *fall* and *return* again to their own *Genius*, when they have ſtrain'd a little to reach that of *Virgil:* and amidſt the vain *Efforts* of a *ſervile imitation*, there continually eſcapes from them ſome *ſtrokes* of their own *natural Spirit.* It may be affirm'd likewiſe, that the beſt *modern Poets* have the advantage more by their *Words*, than by their *Thoughts:* what they ſay, would be very little worth, were it deveſted of the *Expreſſion.*

XXXIII.

THE moſt important and moſt neceſſary part for a Poet, to make him ſucceed well on *high Subjects*, is to know well to *diſtinguiſh* what there is of *beautiful* and *pleaſant* in *Nature*, that he may *form* thereof *perpetual Images:* for *Poetry* is an Art where every thing ſhould *pleaſe.* It is not enough to exhibit *Nature*, which in certain places is *rude* and *unpleaſant*; he muſt chooſe in *her* what is *beautiful*, from what is *not: She* has her *ſecret Graces* in *Subjects* which *he* muſt *diſcover.* How *clear-ſighted*

muſt a Poet be, to diſcern what to chooſe, and what to refuſe, without miſtaking, that he may avoid the Object that will not *pleaſe*, and *retain* what will? *Nicander*, *Aratus*, *Lucretius*, in the *Deſcription* they have made of *natural things*, wanted this *admirable Secret*, which *Virgil* afterwards found out: He had the Art to give *Delight* whilſt he *inſtructed* by the *pleaſant Images*, and moſt *exquiſite ſtrokes* of Poetry, which *adorn* his *Georgicks*, and *ſweeten* the harſhneſs of thoſe Precepts he gives on a *Subject*, in it ſelf *auſtere* and *flat*. It is true, *Lucretius* has *beautiful Draughts*, and *Virgil* underſtood well to copy them, without loſing ought of their Perfection, becauſe he had a Judgment to diſcern them; which knowledge cannot be attain'd, but by a long Commerce with the good Authors of Antiquity, whoſe Works are the only *true ſources*, whence theſe *Riches* ſo neceſſary to Poetry may be *drawn*, and whence is derived that *good ſenſe*, and that *juſt diſcernment* which diſtinguiſhes the *true* from the *falſe* in *natural Beauties*: and a Poet that hath found in his Works theſe *happy Hits*, which are born to *pleaſe*, may rejoyce as much as the Workman

Workman that hath found a *precious Jewel.* It is not, but by the help of his *Genius*, that he finds theſe *Beauties*, and they are made by the *turn* given to the things he writes.

XXXIV.

THere is a particular *Rhetorick* for *Poetry*, which the *modern Poets* ſcarce underſtand at all; this Art conſiſts in diſcerning very preciſely what ought to be ſaid *figuratively*, and what to be ſpoken *ſimply* : and in knowing well where Ornament is requir'd, and where not. *Taſſo* underſtood not well this *Secret*, he is too *trim* and too *polite* in places, where the *gravity* of the *Subject* demanded a more *ſimple* and *ſerious Style:* As for example, where *Tancred* comes near the Tomb of *Clorinda*, he makes the unfortunate Lover, who came from ſlaying his Miſtreſs, ſpeak *points*, inſtead of expreſſing his Sorrow *naturally*, he commits this fault in many other places. *Guarini* in his *Paſtor Fido*, and *Bonarelli* in his *Phillis*, are often guilty of this Vice, they alwayes think

rather to ſpeak things *wittily*, than *naturally*: this is the moſt ordinary *Rock* to *mean Wits*, who ſuffer their *Fancy* to flye out after the *pleaſing Images* they find in their way: they ruſh into the deſcriptions of *Groves*, *Rivers*, *Fountains*, and *Temples*, which *Horace* calls *Childiſh* in his Book of *Poeſie*. 'Tis only the Talent of great Men to know to *ſpeak*, and to be *ſilent*; to be *florid*, and to be *plain*; to be *lofty*, and to be *low*; to uſe *Figures*, and to ſpeak *ſimply*; to mingle *Fiction* and *Ornament* as the *Subject* requires: Finally, to manage all well in his *Subject*, without pretending to give *delight*, where he ſhould only *inſtruct*, and without *riſing* in *great Thoughts*, where *natural* and *common Sentiments* are required; a *ſimple Thought* in its proper place, is more worth than all the moſt *exquiſite Words* and *Wit* out of ſeaſon. *Fancy* which is all the *Wit* of common Writers, apprehends not this; this *Diſcernment* and this particular *Rhetorick*, which is proper to *Poetry*, is a pure effect of the *Judgment*.

XXXV. Yet

XXXV.

YET is there in *Poetry* as in other *Arts*, certain *things* that *cannot be expreſſed*, which are (as it were) *Myſteries*. There are no Precepts to teach the *hidden Graces*, the inſenſible *Charms*, and all that *ſecret power* of *Poetry* which paſſes to the *Heart*, as there is no *method* to teach to *pleaſe*, 'tis a pure effect of *Nature*. However, *Nature* alone can never *pleaſe* regularly, unleſs in the ſmall *Compoſitions*: there muſt be the aſſiſtance of *Art* to ſucceed well in the *great Poems*. 'Tis by this help that a *Genius* a little cultivated, ſhall *range* his Thoughts in that admirable order which makes the greateſt Beauty in the productions of *Wit*: By this order every thing becomes delightful, becauſe, as *Horace* ſaith, *'tis in its place*; but this is the work of *Judgment*, as *Invention* the work of *Imagination*; and this *Order* that keeps all right, and without which the moſt *beautiful* become *deform'd*, is a *myſtery* but little known to *modern Poets*

XXXVI.

NExt to *Order*, the greateſt delight of *Poetry* comes from the *Manners*, and from the *Paſſions*, when they are well handled. *If you would have Applauſe*, ſaith *Horace* to the Poets, *learn well to diſtinguiſh the Manners of every Age, and the Characters proper to them in general and in particular.* It was by this *great Secret* that *Menander* got that high Reputation at *Athens*, as appears by the Teſtimony of *Plutarch*, and that *Terence* ſo exceedingly pleaſed the *Romans*; never Poet better underſtood the *Manners*, than theſe two. *Plato* affirms, in the Ninth Book of his *Commonwealth*, that *Homer* had prrticularly ſignaliz'd himſelf by the *Manners* of Men which he had deſcribed in his *Poems* to the life. But that I may not repeat what hath been ſaid in the Twenty fifth *Reflection*, I proceed to the *Paſſions* which give no leſs Grace to *Poetry* than the *Manners*: when the Poet has found the Art to make them move by their *natural Springs*. *Without the* Paſſions *all is* cold

cold *and* flat *in the Diſcourſe*, ſaith *Quintilian:* for they are, as it were, the *Soul* and *Life* of it; but the *ſecret* is to expreſs them according to the ſeveral Eſtates and different Degrees from their birth: and in this Diſtinction conſiſts all the *Delicacy*, wherewith the *Paſſions* are to be handled, to give them that *Character* which renders them *admirable* by the *ſecret motions* they impreſs on the *Soul*. *Hecuba* in *Euripides* falls into a *Swound* on the *Stage*, the better to expreſs all the *weight* of her Sorrow that could not be repreſented by Words. But *Achilles* appears with too much Calmneſs and Tranquillity at the *Sacrifice* of *Iphigenia*, deſign'd for him in Marriage by *Agamemnon:* his Grief has Expreſſions too little ſuiting to the natural *Impetuoſity* of his *Heart*. *Clytemneſtra* much better preſerves her *Character*, ſhe diſcovers all the Paſſion of a Mother in the loſs of a Daughter ſo lovely as was this *unfortunate* Princeſs, whom they were about to *ſacrifice*, to appeaſe the Gods: and *Agamemnon* generouſly lays aſide the tenderneſs of a *Father*, to take, as he ought, the *Sentiments* of a *King*; he neglected his own intereſt, to provide for the

the *publick*. *Seneca*, ſo little *natural* as he is, omits not to have of theſe ſtrokes that diſtinguiſh the Paſſion, as that of *Phædra* in the ſecond Act of his *Hippolitus*; for ſhe affects a negligence of her Perſon, and conſidered it as not very proper to pleaſe a *Hunter*, who hated *Ornament* and *Neatneſs*. 'Tis finally this exact *Diſtinction* of the different Degrees of *Paſſion*, that is of moſt *Effect* in *Poetry*: for this gives the *Draught* of *Nature*, and is the moſt *infallible Spring* for moving the *Soul*; but it is good to obſerve that the moſt *ardent* and *lively Paſſions* become *cold* and *dead*, if they be not well managed, or be not in their place. The Poet muſt judge when there muſt be a *Calm*, and when there muſt be *Trouble*; for nothing is more ridiculous, than *Paſſion* out of ſeaſon. But it is not enough to *move* a *Paſſion* by a *notable Incident*, there muſt be *Art* to *conduct* it, ſo far as it ſhould go; for by a *Paſſion* that is *imperfect* and *abortive*, the Soul of the *Spectator* may be *ſhaken*; but this is not enough, it muſt be *raviſh'd*.

XXXVII.

XXXVII.

BEſides the *Graces* that *Poetry* finds in diſplaying the *Manners* and the *Paſſions:* there is a certain *I know not what* in the *Numbers*, which is underſtood by few, and notwithſtanding gives great *Delight* in *Poetry*. *Homer* hath excelled generally all the Poets by this Art; whether the *Nature* of his Language was favourable to him, by the *Variety* in the *Numbers*, and by the *noble Sound* of the *Words:* or that the *Delicacy* of his *Ear* made him perceive this *Grace*, whereof the other Poets of his time were not ſenſible; for his Verſe ſound the moſt *harmonioufly* that can be imagin'd. *Atheneus* pretends that nothing is more proper to be ſung than the Verſes of *Homer*, ſo *natural* is the *Harmony* of them; 'tis true, I never read this Poet, or hear him read, but I feel, what is found in a Battle, when the *Trumpets* are heard. *Virgil*, who had a *nice Ear*, did not imitate *Homer* in this, further than the *Harſhneſs*, or rather the *Heavineſs* of the *Latin Tongue* permitted him.

him. *Ennius* had not then in his days diſcovered this *Grace*, which is in the *Numbers*, whereof appears no Footſtep in his Verſe. *Lucretius* perceived it firſt, but gave only the imperfect ſtrokes of this *Beauty* in *Verſification*, which *Virgil* finiſh'd ſo far as the *Language* was capable. The other Poets, as *Ovid* in his *Metamorphoſes*, *Statius* in his two *Poems*, *Valerius Flaccus* in his *Argonautes*, *Silius Italicus* in his *Hannibal*, *Claudian* in his *Raviſhment* of *Proſerpina* never went ſo far. Among the *modern* Poets that have writ in *Latin* of late days, thoſe who could attain to the *Numbers* and *Cadence* of *Virgil* in the *Turn* of their Verſe, have had moſt Reputation; and becauſe that *Buchanan*, who otherwiſe had *Wit*, *Fancy*, and a *pure Style*, perceiv'd not this *Grace*, or neglected it, he hath loſt much of his Price: perhaps nothing was wanting to make him an Accompliſh'd Poet, but this Perfection, which moſt certainly is not *Chimerical*; and whoever ſhall reflect a little on the power of the *Dorian*, *Lydian* and *Phrygian* Airs, whereof *Ariſtotle* ſpeaks in his *Problems*, and *Athenæus* in his *Banquets*; he may acknowledge what Vertue

tue there is in *Number* and *Harmony:* It is a *Beauty* unknown to the *French* Tongue, where all the *Syllables* are counted in the Verſes, and where there is no *Diverſity* of *Cadence.*

XXXVIII.

THere yet remain *Beauties* and *Ornaments,* whereof each Tongue is capable, and theſe the Poet muſt underſtand, and muſt not confound, when he writes in another Tongue, than thoſe he propoſes for Models, which *Virgil* hath well obſerv'd in imitating *Homer*; for he did not give himſelf over to follow him *ſervilely* in the exact *Turn* of his *Verſification:* he knew withall that thoſe *big Words* which make a *Beauty* at the end of the *Greek* Verſes, would have been no *Elegancy* in the *Latin:* becauſe, in effect, this ſucceeds not with *Lucretius. Virgil* found that the *Character* of the *Latin* Tongue requir'd *Numbers* too *ſevere,* as *Martial* obſerves, to allow of that *licentious Cadence,* which was familiar with the *Greek. Horace,* who propos'd the *Odes* of *Pindar* for the Model

del of thoſe he wrote in *Latin*, quitted immediately the *Numbers* and the *Turn* of that Author's *Verſe*, of which he found the *Latin* Tongue uncapable, as the *French Poetry* is not accommodated to the *Numbers* of the *Spaniſh* and *Italian*, becauſe every Language is confined within certain *Bounds*, which makes the *Beauty* of their *Character*. 'Tis a great Art to *know* theſe *Beauties*, and well to *diſtinguiſh* them each from other; but beſides the *Numbers* that are *particular* to each Tongue, there is alſo a certain *Turn of the Period* which makes the *Cadence* and the *Harmony*, of which none ought to be ignorant, How many are there of the *modern* Poets, who have endeavour'd to imitate *Virgil*, without being able to attain this *admirable Turn*, which renders him ſo *Majeſtick*? *Sannazarius*, *Fracaſtorius*, *Sadoletus*, *Sainte Marthe* come ſomewhat nigh it, the others never ſo much as underſtood it. This *caſt of the Period* which is proper to each kind of Verſe, is neceſſary for expreſſing their *Character*: it muſt be *grave*, and the *Numbers thick* in *Heroick*, in *Tragick* Verſe, and in *Odes*: it muſt be

ſoft

ſoft and *eaſie* in the *little* Verſe and *delicate* Subjects.

XXXIX.

BEſides all the *Rules* taken from *Ariſtotle*, there remains *one* mention'd by *Horace*, to which all the other *Rules* muſt be ſubject, as to the moſt *eſſential*, which is the *Decorum*. Without which the other *Rules* of *Poetry* are falſe: it being the moſt *ſolid Foundation* of that *probability* ſo *eſſential* to this Art. Becauſe it is only by the *Decorum* that this *probability* gains its *Effect*; all becomes *probable*, where the *Decorum* is ſtrictly preſerv'd in all Circumſtances. One ordinarily *tranſgreſſes* this *Rule*, either by confounding the *ſerious* with the *pleaſant*, as *Pulci* has done in his Poem of *Morgante*; or by giving *Manners* diſproportionate to the Condition of the Perſons, as *Guarini* has done to his *Shepherds*, which are too *polite*: in like manner as thoſe of *Ronſard* are too *groſs*; or becauſe no regard is had to make the *wonderful* Adventures *probable*,

ble, whereof *Arioſto* is guilty in his *Orlando*; or that a due *preparation* is not made for the *great* Events by a *natural* Conduct, in which *Bernardo Taſſo* tranſgreſſed in his Poem of *Amadis*, and in his *Floridante*; or by want of care to ſuſtain the *Characters* of Perſons, as *Theophile* in his Tragedy of *Pyramus* and *Thisbe*; or by following rather a *capricious Genius* than *Nature*, as *Lope de Vega*, who gives his *Wit* too much *Swinge*, and is ever *foiſting* in his own Fancies on all Occaſions; or by *Want* of *Modeſty*, as *Dante*, who invokes his own *Wit* for his *Deity*; and as *Boccace*, who is perpetually *ſpeaking of himſelf*: or by ſaying every thing *indifferently* without Shame, as Cavalier *Marino* in his *Adonis*. Finally, whatever is againſt the *Rules* of *Time*, of *Manners*, of *Thoughts*, of *Expreſſion*, is contrary to the *Decorum*, which is the moſt *univerſal* of all the *Rules*.

XL. And

XL.

AND to cloſe, in a laſt *Reflection*, all the others that can be made, the Poet muſt underſtand that the great *Secret* of the *Art* is to work his *Matter* well, and to *execute* happily what he had deſign'd with all the *Attention* his Subject requires; that he know always, that in great Works he may be *negligent* in certain places, which regularly ought to be *neglected*; that all may not be *finiſh'd* alike, and what is *finiſh'd* may appear ſo the more, among the ſtudied *Negligences*. Theſe *ſtrokes* leſs perfect than the reſt, and theſe *Inequalities* of Expreſſion which Art requires, are as neceſſary to *Poeſie*, as the *Shades* to a *Painter*, which ſerve to give *Luſtre* to the other parts of his Work. 'Tis the fault of the mean *Wits*, to expreſs things more high than they ought to be expreſſed. So the Poet muſt take heed that he run not with the young *Writers* into the *florid Style*, by his exceſſive *Ornaments*, and far-fetch'd *Beauties*; that he

retrench boldly what is too luxuriant, for all becomes *falſe* in *Poetry*, that *glitters* too much. The Poet is in no wiſe *natural*, who will be always ſpeaking *fine things*: he will not be ſo prodigal of his *Wit*, when he hath *Wit form'd* as it ought to be; for all he *ſpeaks* is worth nothing, if he will be ſpeaking *too finely*. The courſe he muſt take to come at *good Senſe*, is to have yet a greater care in his Expreſſion of *Things*, than in his *Words*, becauſe it is in the *Things* he muſt ſearch the *principal Graces* of his *Diſcourſe*. The *Diſcourſe* muſt be diverſifi'd by the *Variety* of *Expreſſions*, becauſe the *ſame Images* tire the Mind of the Reader: and there muſt not only be frequent *Figures* in the *Words*, but alſo different *Turns* in the *Thoughts*. The narrow and limited *Wits* are always finding themſelves, and by the *Barrenneſs* of their *Genius*, become like that *Player of the Lute in* Horace, who could onely *ſtrike on one ſtring*. For the reſt, it is good to be mindful, that none muſt meddle with making *Verſes*, who does not make them *excellently*, and does not *diſtinguiſh* himſelf from others. For ſince none is oblig'd to make them, to what

what end ſhould he *crack* his Brain, and *hazard* his Reputation, unleſs he acquit himſelf well? He may know likewiſe that *Poetry* will be no Honour to Men of *little Senſe*; and that the Appetite of *Verſe-making* is a dangerous Malady, when it ſeizes on an *indifferent Wit*: that he is liable to all Extravagancies imaginable, who is *taken* therewith and wants a *Genius*: that he ſhou'd be endu'd with *ſubmiſſion*, and be docible, that he fall not into this Misfortune. For after the manner Men live at preſent, he may find every where ſome or other who out of *Charity* or *ill Humour*, are always ready to give him Advice: that the greateſt *Fault* of a Poet is to be *indocible*; and that nothing hath made ſo many *bad Poets*, as *Flattery*, which will be continually *buzzing* in his Ears, and *daubing* him on that occaſion ſo ſoon as he begins to *tamper* with writing Verſe; eſpecially it is to be conſider'd, that he ſhould apply himſelf *betimes* to this Myſtery, to attain any *Perfection*: that he may *form* his Imagination to that *delicate Air*, which is not to be had, but from the firſt *Idea's* of our Youth. *Julius* and

Joſeph Scaliger could not ſucceed herein, for having begun this ſtudy too *late*, neither of them could overcome the *Stiffneſs* of their *Genius*, which had before *bent* their *Wit* another way: and though the *Son* was more polite than his *Father*, yet had he nothing of *Elegancy*, or *graceful* in his *Poetry*, no more than the other *Learned Men* of his time; and that he who aſpires to the Glory of this Profeſſion, may reckon that he hath much more to loſe, than to gain, by writing Verſe, in an Age ſo *ſqueamiſh* as this of ours. We are no longer in that Age, when Men got Reputation by their *fool-hardy* Writing: then it was no difficult matter to impoſe, ſeeing what *glitter'd*, was more reſpected than what was *ſolid*: and one may reflect that nothing can now ſucceed in *Poetry*, unleſs it be *delicately conceiv'd*, and *formed* with the utmoſt *Regularity*, and *ſet off* with all the *Grace* and *Happineſs* of Expreſſion: that Verſe are not *tolerable*, if but *indifferent*; and are *ridiculous*, unleſs they be *admirable*. That, finally, true *Poetry* is not perceiv'd, but by the Impreſſion it makes on the Soul;

Soul; it is not as it ſhould be, unleſs it go to the Heart: hence it is that *Homer animates* me, *Virgil heats* me, and all the reſt *freeze* me, ſo *cold* and *flat* they are.

This is what may be ſaid in *General* of *Poetry*, after follows the *Particular*.

REFLECTIONS ON ARISTOTLE'S BOOK OF POESIE In Particular.

I.

ARISTOTLE distinguishes POESIE into Three divers kinds of perfect POEMS, the *Epick*, the *Tragick*, and the *Comick*. *Horace* reduces these Three into Two only, One whereof consists in *Action*, the Other in

in *Narration*; all the other Kinds whereof *Ariſtotle* makes mention, may be brought to theſe Two, the *Comedy* to the *Dramatick*, the *Satyr* to the *Comedy*, the *Ode* and *Eclogue* to the *Heroick* Poem; for the *Sonnet*, *Madrigal*, *Epigram*, &c. are only a ſort of *imperfect* Poems; it is the Poets part to conſult his Strength in the different ways he muſt hold in the different *Characters* of *Verſe*, that he may not do violence to his *Genius*.

II.

THE *Epick* Poem is that which is the *Greateſt* and moſt *Noble* in *Poeſie*: it is the *greateſt Work* that Humane Wit is capable of. All the *Nobleneſs*, and all the *Elevation* of the moſt *perfect Genius*, can hardly ſuffice to form one ſuch as is requiſite for an *Heroick* Poet; the difficulty of finding together *Fancy* and *Judgment*, Heat of *Imagination*, and Sobriety of *Reaſon*, Precipitation of *Spirit*, and Solidity of *Mind*, cauſes the Rareneſs of this *Character*, and of this happy *Temperament*, which makes a Poet ac-

compliſh'd; it requires *great Images*, and yet a *greater Wit* to form them. Finally, there muſt be a *judgment* ſo ſolid, a diſcernment ſo exquiſite, ſuch perfect knowledge of the Language, in which he writes; ſuch *obſtinate ſtudy*, profound *meditation*, vaſt *capacity*, that ſcarce whole Ages can produce one *Genius* fit for an *Epick Poem*. And it is an Enterprize ſo bold, that it cannot *fall* into a wiſe Man's Thoughts, but affright him. Yet how many Poets have we ſeen of late days, who, without *capacity*, and without *ſtudy*, have dared to undertake theſe ſort of Poems; having no other Foundation for *all*, but the only *heat* of their *imagination*, and ſome *briskneſs* of *ſpirit*.

III.

BUT another *hinderance* to this *Character*, is to have a Wit too *vaſt*; for ſuch will make nothing *exact* in theſe kind of Works, whoſe chief Perfection is the *juſtneſs*. Theſe Wits that ſtrike at all, are apt to paſs the bounds: the *ſwinge* of their *Genius* carries them

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to Irregularity; nothing they do is exact, becauſe their *Wit* is not: All that they ſay, and all that they imagine, is *always vaſt*; they neither have proportion in the *Deſign*, nor juſtneſs in the *Thought*, nor exactneſs in the *Expreſſion*. This Fault is common to the moſt of the *modern* Poets, eſpecially to the *Spaniards*, as *Diego Ximenes*, in his Poem of *Cid Ruydias de Bivar*; *Camoens* in his *Conqueſt of the* Indians *by the* Portugueſe: And among the *Italians*, *Boiardo*, *Arioſto*, Cavalier *Marino*, and *Chiabrera*, whoſe Works are very ill Patterns for an *Epick Poem*: They perpetually *digreſs*, yet there is always *Wit* in their *digreſſions*. The *French*, who pretend to *Wit*, and love *Wit* even in trifles, ſuffer'd themſelves to be blinded with the Poems of *Arioſto* and Cavalier *Marino*. The beauty of their Verſe, their Expreſſion, the pleaſant Images they make of things they treat of, and the Charms of their Verſe, have ſo enchanted moſt part of theſe French Poets, that they have not ſeen the groſs Enormities of Judgment thoſe Authors run into. This is ordinary with Poets that have *Wit*, and little *Judgment*: they endeavour to hide

hide what is irregular in their *Works* by *glittering Faults*, and *falſe Beauties*; but they muſt have a great *Judgment* and *Wiſdom* to ſuſtain a great *Deſign* in the utmoſt Regularity.

IV.

THE Value of *Heroick Poeſie* is yet more *high* by the *Matter*, and by its *End*, than by its *Form*; it diſcourſes not but of *Kings* and *Princes*; it gives not Leſſons but to the *Grandees* to govern the People, and ſets before them the *Idea* of a *Virtue* much more *perfect* than *Hiſtory* can do; for *Hiſtory* propoſes not *Virtue*, but *imperfect* as it is found in the *particulars*; and *Poetry* propoſes it free from all *Imperfections*, and as it ought to be in *general*, and in the *abſtract*. This made *Ariſtotle* confeſs, Ariſt. Poet. cap. 10. *That* Poeſie *is a better School of Virtue, than* Philoſophy *it ſelf*, becauſe it goes more directly to Perfection by the *veriſimility*, than Philoſophy can do with the *naked Truth*. And becauſe the Poet gives not *Reaſon* for what he

he ſaith, as the Philoſopher, but the *Reaſon* muſt be perceiv'd without his ſpeaking it.

V.

Poeſie in *general* is a Picture or Imitation of an *Action*; and *Heroick Poeſie* is the Imitation or Picture of an *Heroick Action*, as *Ariſtotle* informs us. The *Qualifications* he gives to this *Action*, are, that it be *one*, and *ſimple*, *true*, or that paſſes for *true*, and that it ought to be *happy*, *commendable*, and *entire*. He believes that it muſt be *one* and *ſimple*, to avoid *confuſion*; that it muſt be *true* to deſerve *Credit*; *happy* and *commendable*, to ſerve for a Pattern and Inſtruction to the *Grandees*, and to be a *publick Example* of *Virtue*. Finally, it muſt be *entire*, that there may be nothing in it *imperfect*. Theſe *Conditions* are ſo eſſential to the *Action*, which is to ſerve for the *Subject* of an *Heroick Poem*, that it is altogether *defective*, if any one of them be wanting: but to the end the *Action* may be *entirely perfect*, in a Poem, all muſt go in a *direct Line* to eſtabliſh

bliſh the *Merit* of the *Heroe*, and to diſtinguiſh him from all others: As the *Figures* in a Table ought to have nothing ſo *ſhining* either by the Colours, or by the Lights that may divert the Eyes from the *principal Figure*. 'Tis in this that *Taſſo* was miſtaken, who in his Poem of the *Conqueſt* of *Hieruſalem*, makes *Rinaldo* do all that is *ſhining* and extraordinary; it is *Rinaldo* that ſlays *Adraſtus*, *Tyſapharnes*, *Solyman*, and all the principal Leaders of the *Enemy*: 'Tis he that breaks the *Charm* of the *Enchanted Foreſt*; the moſt important *Epiſodes* are reſerv'd for him; nothing is done in his abſence: he alone is call'd out to all the great *Actions*. *Godfrey*, who is the *Heroe*, has nothing to do; and it is in vain that *Taſſo* would excuſe this Fault by the *Allegory* in a long Treatiſe made to that end; that is to juſtifie one *Chimera* with another. *Homer*, whoſe ſenſe was more right, by a *Spirit* altogether contrary, makes *Achilles*, who is his *Heroe*, do all; though it is true, he ſtrays ſometimes too far from him, and forgets him. *Virgil* never falls into this Fault: one ſhall never loſe the ſight of *Æneas* in the *Æneid*, as they do of *Achilles* in the *Iliad*.

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VI.

THE *Action* muſt neither be too *vaſt*, nor too much *limited*, it muſt have a juſt Greatneſs within the natural proportion of an *heroick Action*, to be perfect. The War of *Troy* that laſted Ten Years, had been a matter diſproportion'd for a Poem; ſo great an Object had tyr'd the *Wit*, and a natural *Action* of the ſame man cannot regularly be of that continuance; but neither ought it to be too much *limited*, leſt it become deſpicable by the *littleneſs*. Hence it is that the Poem of *Gabriel Chiabrera* on the *Conqueſt* of *Rhodes* by *Amedee*, of *Savoy*, is in ſome meaſures defective in the Action, which laſts but four Days. For great Atchievements, to be extraordinary, are not perform'd but by ſlow means, and *Intrigues* wrought and woven with a long Thread: with Perſons often abſent and remote: more time is neceſſary to move the *Springs* of *great Deſigns*. Beſides, in the precipitation of ſo ſhort time, the *Events* cannot be prepar'd, the

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Characters ſuſtain'd, the *Incidents* manag'd, the *Manners* obſerv'd, and nothing works as it ſhould do in theſe great *Machines*; and the *probability* is throughout deſtro'yd.

VII.

THE *Unity* of the *Action*, however *ſimple* and *ſcrupulous* it ought to be, is no Enemy to thoſe Delights which naturally ariſe from *variety*, when the *variety* is attended with that *Order* and that *proportion* which makes *Uniformity*; as one Palace may contain the various Ornaments of Architecture, and a great diverſity of parts, provided it be built in the ſame *Order*, and after the ſame Deſign. This *variety* hath a large Field in *Heroick Poeſie*; the *Enterprizes* of *War*, the *Treaties of* Peace, *Ambaſſies*, *Negotiations*, *Voyages*, *Councils*, *Debates*, building of *Palaces* and *Towns*, *Manners*, *Paſſions*, unexpected *Diſcoveries*, unforeſeen and ſurprizing *Revolutions*, and the different *Images* of all that happens in the Life of *great Men*, may there be employ'd, ſo be that all go to the ſame end;

end; without this *order*, the moſt *beautiful Figures* become *monſtrous*, and like thoſe *Extravagances* that *Horace* taxes as ridiculous, in the beginning of his *Book* of *Poeſie*.

VIII.

IT is particularly by the *Art* of *Epiſodes*, that this great *variety* of *Matters* which *adorn* a Poem, is brought into the principal *Action*; but though the *Epiſodes* are a kind of Digreſſion from the *Subject*, being an Adventure wholly foreign, that is added to the *principal Action* to adorn it; yet, however, it ought to have a *natural relation* to the *principal Action*, to make thereof a *Work* that hath *order* and *proportion*: and therefore muſt the *decorum* of *Perſons*, of *Time*, and of *Place*, be preſerv'd. Without this Condition the *Epiſode* is no longer *probable*, and there appears an *Air* of *Affectation*, which becomes ridiculous. Which *Horace* reproaches to the witleſs Poets, who would be *gay* on *grave Subjects*, and ſearch foreign *Ornaments*, where only the *natural* were proper. The *Epiſodes* of *Lucan*, who makes long

long *Scholaſtick Diſſertations* and *Diſputes* merely *ſpeculative*, on things that fall in his way, ſhew much of *Conſtraint* and *Affectation*. But beſides that the *Epiſode* muſt be natural, and never farfetch'd; it is to be handled with a certain *Management* and *Dexterity*, that it may not lie in the way to make *Confuſion*, nor burthen the *Subject* with too much Action. 'Tis for this cauſe *Ariſtotle* ſo greatly blames the *Epiſodical Fables*; and it is alſo in this that the Art of *Homer* principally appears, who never confounds any thing in the throng of objects he repreſents: never was Poem more charg'd with matter than the *Iliad*, yet never any thing appear'd more ſimple or more natural; for every thing there is in due Order. Any too licentious *Parachroniſm* may render an *Epiſode* defective and imperfect, though that of *Dido* in the *Fourth* of the *Æneid* is pardonable, by the admirable effect it produceth: and in ſo great an *Elongation* of times as thoſe of *Æneas* and *Dido*, the Poet need not be a ſlave to *Chronology*. The moſt natural *Epiſodes* are moſt proper to circumſtantiate the principal Action beſt, that are the *Cauſes*, the *Effects*,

fects, the *beginning*, and the *conſequences* of it; but we find not *always* theſe Qualifications in *Taſſo*, who ſeeks to pleaſe often by paſſages that are too *glittering*; and much leſs in *Arioſto*, whoſe *Epiſodes* are too affected, never *probable*, never prepar'd, and often without any dependance on his ſubject, as that of King *Agramante* and *Marfiſa*; but theſe things are not to be expected from a Poem, where the *Heroes* are *Paladins*: and where predominates an air of *Chimerical* and *Romantick Knight-errantry*, rather than any *Heroick Spirit*.

IX.

THough all muſt be *natural* in an *Epick Poem*, yet the *order* that is obſerv'd in relating things, ought not ſo to be; for were it *natural*, and according to the ſucceſſion of time, it would be a *Hiſtory*, and not a *Poem*; and thereby one would fall into the ſame fault with the *impertinent Scribler*, whom *Horace* makes ridiculous, who begun his Poem of the *Trojan War*, *with the loves of* Jupiter *and* Leda, *and with the birth of* He-

len, who was the cauſe of the War: For to render the *Narration* more inſinuating, delightful, and ſurpriſing, the Poet muſt confound the *natural* order of times and things, to make thereof one purely *artificial*. 'Tis by this Maxim, that the Poem of *Nonnus* upon *Bacchus*, the *Thebaid* of *Statius*, and the Poems of the firſt *Italians*, who writ before they knew the Rules of *Ariſtotle*; and ſome *Spaniſh* Poems, as that of *Diego Ximenes*, on the *Conqueſt* of *Valentia*, are ſo defective.

X.

THE principal Character of an *Heroick Poem* conſiſts in the *Narration*; 'tis in this that it is oppos'd to the *Dramatick*, which conſiſts altogether in the *action*: but as nothing is more difficult than to *relate* things, as one ought, the Poet muſt employ all his Art to ſucceed herein. The Qualities a *Narration* muſt have, to be perfect, are theſe; it muſt be ſhort and ſuccinct, that nothing may be *idle*, *flat*, or *tedious*; it muſt be *lively*, *quick*, and *delightful*, that it may have nothing but what is *attractive*: Finally,

nally, it muſt be *ſimple* and *natural*; but it is a great *Art*, to know to *relate* things ſimply, and yet the *ſimplicity* not appear. The moſt ordinary graces of a *Narration* muſt come from the *figures*, the *tranſitions*, and from all thoſe delicate *turns*, that carry the Reader from one thing to another, without his regarding it; and in this chiefly conſiſts all the artifice of the *Narration*. It muſt never pour out all *the matter*, that ſome place may always be left for the natural Reflections of the Reader; it muſt likewiſe avoid the *particulars* and the *length* of affected deſcription. Homer, *great Speaker as he is, amuſes not himſelf*, ſays *Lucian, to diſcourſe of the Torments of the unhappy in Hell, when* Ulyſſes *deſcended thither; though this was a fair occaſion for him.* But the *Poet*, when he is judicious, makes no *deſcriptions*, but to clear the *matters*, and never to ſhew his Wit. Finally, the Narration muſt be *delightſom*, not only by the variety of things it relates, but likewiſe by the variety of the *numbers*. 'Tis this Variety that makes the Greek *verſification* more harmonious, and more proper for *Narration*, than the Latin; and though *Taſſo* has been

ſucceſsful enough in the *Narrations* of his Poem, and likewiſe *Arioſto*, who, to me ſeems more *natural* than he; yet the *pauſes* and *interruptions* to which the *Italian Poeſie* is ſubjected, by the *Stanza*'s, do weaken, methinks, and enervate that force and vigor, which makes one part of the *Character* of *Heroick Verſe*. That *Monotomie* of the *Alexandrin* Verſe which can ſuffer no difference, nor any variety of numbers, ſeems to me likewiſe a great weakneſs in the *French Poetry*: And tho' the vigor of the Verſe might be ſuſtain'd either by the great Subjects, or by an extraordinary *Genius* and *Wit* above the common rate, yet this ſort of Verſe will grow tedious and irkſom in *a long Poem*. For the reſt, one ſhall ſcarce ever meet with *Narrations* that are continued with the ſame force, and the ſame ſpirit, except in *Homer* and *Virgil*. It is true, the *Narration* of the death of *Polyxena* in the *Hecuba* of *Euripides*, is the moſt lively and moſt moving in the World; and that of *Tecmeſſa* in the *Ajax* of *Sophocles*, is the moſt tender and moſt paſſionate that can be imagin'd. 'Tis by theſe great Models that a *Poet* muſt learn to be *pathetical* in what he relates, without amuſing

ſing himſelf to make ſubtle and witty *Narrations*, by ridiculous *Affectations*. In the other Greek and Latin Poets, are found only ſome imperfect Eſſays of *Narrations*. He, among the Moderns, who has the beſt *Genius* to ſuſtain all the Nobleneſs of a Narration in Heroick Verſe, is *Hierom Vida* Biſhop of *Alba*, in his Poem on the Death of *Jeſus Chriſt*; and if ſometimes he fell not into low Expreſſions, and harſhneſſes like thoſe of *Lucretius*, his ſtile had been incomparable. *Scaliger* objects againſt the long Narrations, which *Homer* makes his *Heroes* ſpeak in the *heat and fury of a Battel*, in effect this is neither *natural* nor *probable*; neither can I approve the deſcriptions of *Alcina*'s *Palace* in *Arioſto*, nor of *Armida*'s in *Taſſo*, no more than the *particulars* of the pleaſant things which both of them mix in their *Narrations*; hereby they degenerate from their *Character*, and ſhew a kind of *Puerility* that is in no wiſe conformable to the gravity of an Heroick *Poem*, where all ought to be majeſtick.

XI.

NOthing is more eſſential to an *Epick Poem* than *Fiction*, which ought to reign throughout, *Fiction* being its Soul. 'Tis by this that the moſt common things take a character of greatneſs and ſublimity, which renders them extraordinary and admirable. *Ariſtotle* gave but the ſhadow of this precept, which *Petronius* has drawn more fully, by theſe words, *Per anhages deorumque miniſteria præcipitandus eſt liber ſpiritus.* 'Tis thus that meaneſt things become noble; that *Thetis*, in *Homer*, throws her ſelf at the Feet of *Jupiter*, that the Gods aſſemble in *Council*, where ariſe great Debates, their Spirits grow warm, and all Heaven is divided into *Parties*; for what? becauſe, indeed, *Achilles*'s Miſtriſs was taken from him, which at the bottom is but a trifle. 'Tis by this great Art that all the Voyages, and indeed every ſtep that *Telemachus* made in the *Odyſſis*, to ſeek his Father *Ulyſſes*, became conſiderable, becauſe *Minerva* is of his *Retinue*, and of his *Council*; and all

all became remarkable, by the impreſſion they receiv'd from the conduct of a Deity, that preſides over Wiſdom. 'Tis finally by this that *Virgil* gives greatneſs and luſtre to the meaneſt things he ſpeaks. If *Æneas* break a bough, in the *third* of his *Æneid*, to pay a pious Duty to a *Tomb* that he finds accidentally in his way, the *Ghoſt* of *Polydorus* ſpeaks to him from the *bottom* of the Tomb, and this makes an *Epiſode*. If *Aruns* draw an Arrow in the *eleventh* Book, it is by the direction of *Apollo*, who does intereſs himſelf *therein* to kill *Camilla*. Finally, all has *relation to the Gods*, and their Miniſtry, even to the leaſt actions that are deſcrib'd in this Poem, to heighten the luſtre of all that is there done, in that marvellous way, whereof *Ariſtotle* gives ſo admirable Leſſons.

XII.

BUT the importance is, as I before have obſerv'd, that this *admirable* be *probable*, by a juſt mixture and temperament of the one and the other. For the Heroick Action which the Poet pro-

poſes to *imitate*, muſt be render'd not only worthy of *admiration*, but alſo of *credit*, to *attain* its end. The Poets ordinarily are carried without conſideration to ſpeak *incredible* things, whilſt they aim too much at the *marvellous*; they thruſt imprudently into the *Fable*, without managing the *Truth*, becauſe they would pleaſe, without taking care to perſwade; and they ſcarce ever think of the *Preparations*, and all the colours of decency that muſt be employ'd, whereon to ground the *veriſimility*. And 'tis thus *that* by a falſe *Idea* they have of *Poeſie*, they place its beauty in the pleaſant ſurprizes of ſomething extraordinary wonderful: whereas in truth it is not regularly to be found, but in *what is natural* and *probable*. For the ſure way to the *Heart* is not by ſurprizing the *Spirit*; and *all* becomes *incredible* in Poetry, *that appears incomprehenſible*. Scarce *any* of the *Poets* but *Virgil*, had the Art, by the *preparation* of incidents, to manage the *probability* in all the circumſtances of an heroick action. *Homer* is not altogether ſo ſcrupulous and regular in his contrivances; his *Machins* are leſs juſt, and all the *meaſures* he takes to ſave the *probability*,

bility, are leſs exact; I ſhall not give a *particular* in a Subject, where I only allow my ſelf to make Reflections on the general Principles of *Poeſie*. Many Reflections *may be made* in the Works of both the ancient and modern Poets, on the ſubject of this obſervation; for the neceſſity of *probability* is a great check to the Poets, who think to make the Incidents the more heroick, by how much more wonderful and more ſurprizing they be, without regarding whether they be *natural*.

XIII.

FInally, the ſovereign perfection of an Epick Poem, in the opinion of *Ariſtotle*, conſiſts in the *juſt proportion of all the parts*. The *marvellous* of *Tragedy* conſiſts in the *pathetical* ſtile; but the *marvellous* of an *Heroick Poem* is that perfect connexion, that juſt agreement and the admirable relation that the parts of this great work have each to other, as the perfection of a great Palace, conſiſts in the uniformity of Deſign, and in the proportion of Parts. It is this Symmetry that *Horace* ſo much commends in the be-

beginning of his Book of *Poeſie*, where he taxes the ridiculouſneſs of the extravagant diſproportions in the Picture he ſpeaks of; and which he compares to the prodigious Adventures of *Dolphins in the Foreſts*, and *wild Boars in the Sea*, and all the other images he ſo much blames, becauſe diſproportionable to the Subject. And this proportion that *Ariſtotle* demands, is not only in the *quantity* of the *parts*, but likewiſe in the *quality*. In which point *Taſſo* is very faulty, who mixes in his Poem the *light* Character with the *ſerious*, and all the force and majeſty of *Heroick* with the ſoftneſs and delicacy of the *Eclogue* and *Lyrick Poeſie*. For the *Shepherd*'s Adventures with *Herminia*, in the *ſeventh* Canto, and the Letters of her *Lover*'s Name, which ſhe carv'd on the bark of *bays* and *beeches*, the *moan* ſhe made to the *Trees* and *Rocks*, the *purling ſtreams*, the *embroidered meadows*, the *ſinging of Birds*, in which the *Poet* himſelf took ſo much pleaſure: the *enchanted wood* in the *thirteenth* Canto, the *ſongs* of *Armida* in the *fourteenth*, to inſpire *Rinaldo* with love, the *careſſes* this Sorcereſs made him, the deſcription of her *Palace*, where nothing is breath'd but

but *Softneſs* and *Effeminacy*, and thoſe other affected *Deſcriptions* have nothing of that *Grave* and *Majeſtick Character*, which is proper for *Heroick* Verſe. 'Tis thus that *Sannazarius*, in his Poem, *De Partu Virginis*, has injudiciouſly mingled the Fables of *Paganiſm* with the Myſteries of *Chriſtian Religion*; as alſo *Camoens*, who ſpeaks without Diſcretion of *Venus* and *Bacchus*, and the other *profane Deities* in a *Chriſtian* Poem. It is not ſufficient that all be *grand* and *magnificent* in an *Epick* Poem, all muſt be juſt, uniform, proportionable in the different Parts that compoſe it.

XIV.

THis *Proportion of Parts* is ſo *eſſential* to *Heroick*, that it ought likewiſe to be (if I may ſo ſay) the *Soul* of all *little* Poems; as are *Epithalamiums*, *Panegyricks*, and others that are made on the *Birth*, and *brave Actions* of *Great Men*; and theſe Poems are ſo far perfect, as they have that *Unity* and *Proportion* of *Parts*, *requiſite* for a *complete Work*. In this ordinarily are faulty the *Panegyriſts*,

riſts, and all thoſe pretended Poets, that ſeek to make their *Fortune*, by making their *Court* to *great Perſons*. For beſides that there is nothing more difficult, than to *praiſe*, and that by ſo bold an Enterprize, one ordinarily expoſes himſelf to be render'd ridiculous, as well as thoſe he commends, becauſe he does it ill; the common Undertakers, in this kind, who have not force to *form* handſomly a *Deſign*, looſe the *Reins* to their *Fancy*, and after they have pil'd a heap of groſs and deformed Praiſes without *Order* or *Connexion* one upon another, this, forſooth, muſt be call'd a *Panegyrick*. 'Tis thus that *Claudian* has *prais'd* the Emperour *Honorius* and the Conſuls, *Probinus*, *Olybrius*, *Stilicon*, and the other illuſtrious Perſons of his time. Throughout all his *Panegyricks* reigns an *Air* of *Youthfulneſs*, that has nothing of what is *ſolid*, though there appear ſome *Wit*. I ſpeak not of *Auſonius*, nor *Prudentius*, and the *Latine* Poets, who have writ *Panegyricks*; becauſe all of them have writ after this manner, and yet more *feebly*, according to the *Decline* of the Ages in which they writ. *Tibullus* himſelf, otherwiſe ſo exact and polite in his

his Elegies, falls ſhort in his *Panegyrick* of *Meſſala*; ſo hard is it to *praiſe* well. And nothing perhaps has contributed more to render the Character of a Poet a little ridiculous, than the vile and unmanly Flatteries whereby moſt part of thoſe that profeſs'd *Poetry* have debas'd themſelves. For a Man always praiſes ill, when he *praiſes* for Intereſt; and there is nothing but theſe ſottiſh Praiſes that bring a Diſparagement on Poets. What *Art*, what *Springs*, what *Turns*, what *Wit* muſt be employ'd, to *praiſe* well, and how few are *capable* to do it? For *Praiſe* has always ſomething *groſs* in it, if it lie too open, and go in a direct Line. *Voiture*, one of the moſt *delicate Wits* of theſe latter Ages, never ſcarce, commended any but in *Drollery*; and it may be ſaid that of a long time none has done it with more *Succeſs*. The true *Models* that ought to be taken, to *praiſe* well, are the Poems of *Homer* and *Virgil*; *Homer* praiſes not *Achilles*, but by the *ſimple* and *bare* Relation of his Actions; and never was Man *prais'd* ſo delicately as *Auguſtus* by *Virgil*; it is not but, as it were, by covert paths that he conducts him to *glory*. There was not

not a *Roman* that had any thing of Underſtanding, who knew not well that *Virgil* commended not the *Piety* of *Æneas*, but to honour that of *Auguſtus*, whoſe Portraict he draws in his *Heroe*; for whatever the Poet ſays of the one, is onely for the other. Whereby, one may ſay, that never Man knew better the Art of *praiſing*; for he ſaves all the modeſty of the Perſon he *praiſeth*, even whilſt he overwhelms him with *praiſe*. Finally, the *true art* of *praiſing*, is to ſay, *laudable things* ſimply, but delicately, for *praiſes* are not to be endur'd, unleſs they be *fine* and *hidden*. The truth is, 'tis ſo hard a thing to *praiſe* as one ought, that it is a Rock, which they that are wiſe ſhould ſhun. And ſince the Poets are ordinarily too laviſh in this kind, they may make advantage ſometimes of this Reflection, to ſave their Reputation, that whilſt they pretend to give *honour* to *particulars*, themſelves be not pitied by the Publick. This is all that can be obſerv'd moſt *eſſential* to an *Epick* Poem; and now follows a *Judgment* that may be made of thoſe who have writ in this kind of *Poeſie*.

XV. *Ho-*

XV.

Homer is the moſt perfect *Model* of the *Heroick Poeſie*; and he only, ſaith *Ariſtotle*, *deſerves the name of* Poet; 'tis certain, never man had a more happy *Genius*. *Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus* commends him chiefly for *the contrivance of his Deſign*, the *Greatneſs and Majeſty of his Expreſſion*, the ſweet and paſſionate motions of his *Sentiments*. *Heſiod*, ſaith he, *was content to be delightful, and to ſpeak well.* All the other *Greek* Poets that writ in this ſort of *Verſe*, have acquitted themſelves ſo meanly, that they have gain'd with Poſterity a Reputation only proportionable to the poorneſs of their *Genius*. *Coluthus* in his Poem of *the Rape of* Helen, has nothing conſiderable, the *Deſign* is ſhallow, the *Style* cold and flat. The Poem of *Tryphiodorus* on the taking of *Troy*, is of a groſs and low *Character*, as likewiſe the *Hiſtory* of *Leander* by *Muſæus*. The Poem of *Apollonius Rhodius*, on the *Expedition of the Argonauts*, is of a ſlender *Character*, and has nothing of that *Nobleneſs* of

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Expreſſion of *Homer*; the *Fable* is ill invented, and the *Liſt* of the *Argonauts* in the Firſt Book is flat. *Quintus Calaber* who would undertake to write the *Supplement* to the *Iliad* and *Odyſſeis*, without having the leaſt ſprinkling of *Homer*'s eaſie and natural Vein, has nothing exact or regular. *Nicander* is hard, *Oppian* dry; and the Poem of *Nonnus*, not ſo much a Poem, as a *Romance*, or *Hiſtory* of the Birth, Adventures, Victories, and *Apotheoſis* of *Bacchus*. The *Deſign* is too *vaſt*, the *Fable* ill *wrought*, without *Art*, without *Order*, without *probability*, the *Style* is obſcure and cumber'd. For the *Latins* never any poſſeſs'd all the *Graces* of *Poeſie* in ſo Eminent a Degree, as *Virgil*; He has an *Admirable taſte* for what is *natural*, and *exquiſite Judgment* for the contrivance, an incomparable *Delicacy* for the *Numbers* and *Harmony* of *Verſification*. The *Deſign* of his *Poem*, well conſider'd in all the Circumſtances, is the moſt judicious, and the beſt devis'd that ever was, or ever will be. *Ovid* has *Wit*, *Art*, *Deſign* in his *Metamorphoſis*; but he has *Youthfulneſſes* that could hardly be pardon'd, but for the *Vivacity* of his *Wit*, and a certain

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happineſs of *Fancy*. *Lucan* is great and ſublime, but has *little Judgment*. *Scaliger* blames his continual Tranſports, for, in effect, he is exceſſive in his Diſcourſe, where he affects rather to appear a Philoſopher, than a Poet. *Petronius* in his *little Poem* of the *Corruption* of *Rome*, falls into all the faults that he condemns; never man gave more judicious Rules for *Poetry*, and never man obſerv'd them worſe. *Statius* is as *fantaſtical* in his *Idea's*, as in his *Expreſſions*; the greatneſs that appears in his ſtile is more in the Words, than in the Things: His two Poems have nothing in them *regular*, all is *vaſt* and diſproportionable. *Silius Italicus* is much more regular; he owes more to his Induſtry than to his Nature; there ſeems ſome judgment and conduct in his Deſign, but nothing of greatneſs and nobleneſs in his Expreſſion; and if one may rely on the younger *Pliny*'s Judgment, there is *more Art than Wit* in his *Poem*; it is rather the *Hiſtory* of the ſecond punick War, than a Poem. That of *Valerius Flaccus* on the *Argonauts*, is incomparably *mean*; the *Fable*, the *Contrivance*, the *Conduct*, all there are of a

very low character. *Claudian* hath Wit and Fancy, but no taſte for that delicacy of the Numbers, and that *Turn* of the Verſe, that the Skilful admire in *Virgil*; he falls perpetually into the ſame *cadence*; for that cauſe, one can hardly read him without being *wearied*; and he has no elevation in any manner. *Auſonius* and *Prudentius* had not a *Genius* ſtrong enough to overcome the groſſneſs of the Age they liv'd in.

XVI.

FOR the *modern*, this judgment may be given. In the Ages ſucceeding, when Letters paſs'd from *Italy* into *Africk*, the *Arabians*, though lovers of *Poetry*, produc'd nothing of Heroick. That barbarous *air* of the *Goths*, which then was ſpread in *Europe* over all Arts, did alſo mingle with *Poetry*; as appears by the Works of *Sidonius*, *Mamercus*, *Nemeſianus*, and others, who writ then after a dry, jejune, and inſipid manner. Some Ages after theſe, *Poeſie* began to flouriſh again in *Italy* by the Poems of *Dante*, *Petrarch*, and *Boccace*. The *Poem* of

of *Dante*, which the *Italians* of thoſe days call'd a *Comedy*, paſſes for an *Epick Poem* in the Opinion of *Caſtelvetro*; but it is of a ſad and woful contrivance. And ſpeaking generally, *Dante* has a ſtrain too profound, *Petrarch* too vaſt, *Boccace* too trivial and familiar, to deſerve the name of *Heroick Poets*; though they have writ with much purity in their own Tongue, eſpecially *Petrarch* and *Boccace*. Theſe were followed ſome time after by the Comte of *Scandian*, *Matthieu Boyardo*, who made the Poem of the *loves* of *Orlando* and *Angelica*; by *Oliviero*, who writ a Poem on *Germany*; by *Pulci* in his *Morgante*; by *Arioſto* in his War of the *Moors* under their King *Agramante* againſt *Charlemagne*; who all ſuffer'd their Wit to be ſquander'd on the Books of *Chevalry* and *Romances* of thoſe times. *Arioſto* has I know not what of an *Epick Poem* more than the others, becauſe he had read *Homer* and *Virgil*; he is pure, great, ſublime, admirable in the expreſſion; his Deſcriptions are Maſterpieces; but he has no *judgment* at all; his Wit is like the fruitful ground that together produces Flowers and Thiſtles; he ſpeaks

well, but thinks ill; and though all the pieces of his Poem are pretty, yet the whole Work together is nothing worth, for an *Epick Poem:* He had not then ſeen the Rules of *Ariſtotle*; as *Taſſo* did afterwards, who is better than *Arioſto*, whatever the *Academy* of *Florence* ſay to the contrary. For *Taſſo* is more correct in his deſign, more regular in the contrivance of his Fable, and more compleat in all the parts of his Poem, than all the other *Italians*; but he mingles ſo much *gallantry* in it, and *affectation*, that he often forgets the *gravity* of his deſign, and the dignity of his character. I ſpeak not of Cavalier *Marino* in his *Adonis*; it is a very ill Model, though he have as much, and perhaps more *Wit* than the others; yet it is a ſort of wild *Wit* that runs looſe with ſuch eagerneſs after what is pleaſant and glittering throughout his whole Work, that, it ſeems, he has not any reliſh for ſolid things. *Sannazarius* and *Vida*, who were famous much about the ſame time among the *Italian Poets*, one for his Poem *de partu virginis*, the other for his of the *paſſion* of our *Saviour*, made appear a good *Genius* for writing in *Latin*; for the

the *purity* of their ſtile is admirable; but the contrivance of their *Fable* has no *delicateneſs*, their *manner* is in no wiſe proportionable to the dignity of their *ſubject*. *Pontanus*, *Politian*, Cardinal *Sadolet*, *Paleotti*, *Strozzi*, Cardinal *Bembo*, and many other *Italians*, writ at the ſame time, in *Latin pure* enough, but with a very *indifferent Wit*. *Camoens*, who is the only *Heroick* Poet of *Portugal*, regarded only to expreſs the haughtineſs of his Nation in his Poem of the *Conqueſt of the Indies*. For he is fierce and faſtuous in his compoſition, but has *little Diſcernment*, and *little Conduct*. *Buchanan*, who is a *Scotch* Poet, has a *Character* compos'd of many *Characters*; his Wit is *eaſie*, *delicate*, *natural*, but not *great* or *lofty*. *Hugo Grotius*, and *Daniel Heinſius*, both *Hollanders*, have writ nobly enough in *Latin* Verſe; but the great Learning wherewith they were fraught, hinder'd them from thinking things in that delicate manner, which makes the beauty. For the *French* Poets who have writ in *Heroick* Verſe, *Dubartas* and *Ronſard*, had all the *Genius* their Age was capable of; but the *French* Poets being ignorant, they both

affected to appear learned to diſtinguiſh them from the common; and corrupted their *Wit*, by an imitation of the *Greek* Poets ill underſtood: They were not skilful enough to place the *ſublime* manner of the *Heroick Verſe* in *things*, rather than in *words*; nor were ſo happy to apprehend that the *French* Tongue is not capable of thoſe compounded words, which they made after the example of the *Greek*, and with which they ſtuffed their Poems; and it was by this indiſcreet affectation to imitate the *Ancients*, that both became barbarous; but beſides, that the contrivance of the Fable of *Ronſard* in his *Franciad* is not natural, the ſort of Verſe he took is not enough majeſtick for an *Herick* Poem. I ſpeak not of other Poems whoſe Authors are living, they have, perhaps, their deſert; but time muſt make proof. Now, let us ſee what Reflections may be made on *Dramatick Poeſie*, which *Ariſtotle* divides into *Tragedy* and *Comedy*.

XVII. *Tra-*

XVII.

Tragedy, of all parts of *Poeſie*, is that which *Ariſtotle* has moſt diſcuſs'd; and where he appears moſt exact. He alledges that *Tragedy* is a *publick Lecture*, without compariſon more *inſtructive* than *Philoſophy*; becauſe it teaches the *Mind* by the ſenſe, and rectifies the paſſions by the paſſions themſelves, in calming by their emotion the Troubles they excite in the Heart. The Philoſopher had obſerv'd two important faults in Man to be regulated, *pride*, and *hardneſs of Heart*, and he found for both Vices a cure in *Tragedy*. For it makes man modeſt, by repreſenting the great *Maſters of the Earth humbled*; and it makes him tender and merciful, by ſhewing him on the Theatre the ſtrange Accidents of Life, and the unforeſeen diſgraces to which the moſt important perſons are ſubject. But becauſe Man is naturally timorous, and compaſſionate, he may fall into another extreme, to be either too fearful, or too full of pity; the too much fear may ſhake the

conſtancy of Mind, and the too great compaſſion may enfeeble the Equity. 'Tis the buſineſs of *Tragedy* to regulate theſe two weakneſſes; it prepares and arms him againſt Diſgraces, by ſhewing them ſo frequent in the moſt conſiderable perſons; and he ſhall ceaſe to fear ordinary Accidents, when he ſees ſuch extraordinary happen to the *higheſt part* of Mankind. But as the end of *Tragedy* is to teach Men not to fear too weakly the common Misfortunes, and manage their Fear; it makes account alſo to teach them to ſpare their compaſſion, for objects that deſerve it. For there is an injuſtice in being mov'd at the Afflictions of thoſe who deſerve to be miſerable. One may ſee without pity *Clytemneſtra* ſlain by her Son *Oreſtes* in *Eſchylus*, becauſe ſhe had cut the Throat of *Agamemnon* her Husband; and one cannot ſee *Hippolytus* dye by the plot of his Stepmother *Phædra* in *Euripides*, without compaſſion; becauſe he dyed not but for being chaſte and virtuous, This to me ſeems, in ſhort, the deſign of *Tragedy*, according to the *ſyſtem* of *Ariſtotle*, which to me appears admirable, but which has not been explain'd

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as it ought by his *Interpreters*; they have not, it may ſeem, ſufficiently underſtood the *Myſtery*, to unfold it well.

XVIII.

BUT it is not enough, that *Tragedy* be furniſh'd with all the moſt *moving* and *terrible Adventures*, that *Hiſtory* can afford, to ſtir in the *Heart* thoſe Motions it pretends, to the end, it may cure the *Mind* of thoſe *vain Fears* that may *annoy* it, and thoſe *childiſh Compaſſions* that that may *ſoften* it. 'Tis alſo neceſſary, ſays the *Philoſopher*, that every Poet employ theſe great *Objects* of *Terrour* and *Pity*, as the two moſt powerful *Springs*, in *Art*, to produce that *Pleaſure* which *Tragedy* may yield. And this *Pleaſure* which is properly of the *Mind*, conſiſts in the *Agitation* of the *Soul* mov'd by the Paſſions. *Tragedy* cannot be delightful to the *Spectator*, unleſs he become ſenſible to all that is repreſented, he muſt *enter* into all the *different Thoughts* of the *Actors*, *intereſt* himſelf in their *Adventures*; *fear*, *hope*, *afflict* himſelf, and *rejoice* with them. The *Theatre* is dull and

and languid, when it ceaſes to produce theſe Motions in the Soul of thoſe that ſtand by. But as of all Paſſions *Fear* and *Pity* are thoſe that make the ſtrongeſt *Impreſſions* on the *Heart* of *Man*, by the natural Diſpoſition he has of being afraid, and of being mollifi'd; *Ariſtotle* has choſen theſe amongſt the reſt, to move more powerfully the Soul, by the tender *Sentiments* they cauſe, when the Heart *admits*, and is *pierced* by them. In effect, when the Soul is ſhaken, by Motions ſo *natural* and ſo *humane*, all the Impreſſions it feels, become *delightful*; its Trouble *pleaſes*, and the Emotion it finds, is a kind of *Charm* to it, which does caſt it into a *ſweet* and *profound Meditation*, and which inſenſibly does ingage it in all the *Intereſts* that are managed on the *Theatre*. 'Tis then that the *Heart* yields it ſelf over to all the *Objects* that are propos'd, that all *Images* ſtrike it, that it eſpouſes the *Sentiments* of all thoſe that ſpeak, and becomes ſuſceptible of all the Paſſions that are preſented, becauſe 'tis mov'd. And in this *Agitation* conſiſts all the *Pleaſure* that one is *capable* to *receive* from *Tragedy*; for the *Spirit* of *Man* does pleaſe it ſelf with the

the different *Situations*, caus'd by the different *Objects*, and the various *Paſſions* that are repreſented.

XIX.

IT is by this *admirable Spring*, that the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles* (of which *Ariſtotle* ſpeaks continually, as of the moſt *perfect Model* of a *Tragedy*) wrought ſuch great *Effects* on the People of *Athens*, when it was repreſented. The truth is, all is *terrible* in that Piece, and all there is *moving*. See the *Subject*. *The Plague deſtroying* Thebes, Oedipus *the King concerned at the Loſs of his Subjects, cauſes the Oracle to be conſulted, for a Remedy. The Oracle ordains him to revenge the Aſſaſſinat committed on the Perſon of his Predeceſſor King* Laius. Oedipus *rages in horrible Imprecations againſt the Author of the Crime, without knowing him; he himſelf makes a ſtrict ſearch to diſcover him; he queſtions* Creon, Tireſias, Jocaſta, *and a Man of* Corinth *for Intelligence; and it appear'd by the Account that this Prince received, that he himſelf committed the Murder, he would puniſh.* The Minds

Minds of the *Spectators* are in a perpetual ſuſpenſe; all the words of *Tireſias*, *Jocaſta*, and the *Corinthian*, as they give *Light* to the *Diſcovery*, cauſe *Terrours* and *Surprizes*; and clear it by little and little. *Oedipus* finding it to be himſelf that was Author of the *Aſſaſſinat*, by Evidence of the *Teſtimonies*, at the ſame time underſtood that *Laius*, whom he had ſlain, was his Father; and that *Jocaſta*, whom he had married, is his Mother, which he knew not till then; becauſe he had from his Infancy been brought up in the Court of the King of *Corinth*. This *Diſcovery* is like a Thunderclap that oblig'd him to abandon himſelf to all the *Deſpair* that his *Conſcience* inſpir'd; he tears out both his Eyes, to puniſh himſelf the more cruelly with his own Hands. But this *Criminal* whom all the World *abhors* before he is known, by a return of *Pity* and *Tenderneſs*, becomes an *Object* of *Campaſſion* to all the Aſſembly; now he is bemoan'd, who a moment before paſs'd for execrable; and they melt at the Misfortnnes of the Perſon they had in *Horrour*; and excuſe the moſt abominable of all Crimes, becauſe the Author is an *Innocent unfortunate*, and

and fell into this Crime, that was foretold him, notwithſtanding all the Precautions he had taken to avoid it; and what is moſt ſtrange, is, that all the ſteps he made to carry him from the Murder, brought him to commit it. Finally, this flux and reflux of *Indignation*, and of *Pity*, this *Revolution* of *Horrour* and of *tenderneſs*, has ſuch a wonderful Effect on the Minds of the Audience; all in this Piece moves with an *Air* ſo delicate and paſſionate, all is *unravell'd* with ſo much Art, the Suſpenſions manag'd with ſo much *probability*; there is made ſuch an univerſal *Emotion* of the *Soul*, by the *Surprizes*, *Aſtoniſhments*, *Admirations*; the ſole *incident* that is form'd in all the piece, is ſo natural, and all tends ſo in a direct line to the *diſcovery* and *Cataſtrophe*; that it may not only be ſaid, that never *Subject* has been better deviſed than this, but that never can be invented a better for *Tragedy*. And thus alſo it was, that the *Andromeda* of *Euripides* (ſo much boaſted of in *Atheneus*, and an *Epiſode* whereof *Alexander* ſung in the laſt Banquet of his Life) wrought thoſe wonderful Effects in the City *Abdera*; when it was acted there by *Archelaus*

laus under the Reign of *Lyſimachus*. The two Parts of *Parſeus* and *Andromeda*, the Misfortunes of this Princeſs expos'd to the Sea-Monſter, and all that mov'd *terrour* and *pity* in this Repreſentation, made ſo ſtrong and violent impreſſion on the people, *That they departed*, ſaith *Lucian*, *from the Theatre, poſſeſs'd (as it were) with the Spectacle, and this became a publick Malady, wherewith the Imaginations of the Spectators were ſeiz'd.* Something of a groſſer ſtroke of this ſort of Impreſſions made by *Tragedy*, has even happen'd in our Days. When *Mondory* acted the *Mariamne* of *Triſtan*, the people never went away but ſad and penſive, making reflection on what they had ſeen, and ſtruck with great pleaſure at the ſame time. Theſe are the two *great Springs* of the *Greek Tragedy*, and all that is *marvellous* in *Dramatick Poems*, reſults principally from what there is of *pity* and *terrour* in the Objects repreſented.

XX.

Modern Tragedy turns on other Principles; the *Genius* of our (the *French*) Nation is not ſtrong enough, to ſuſtain

ſuſtain an *Action* on the *Theatre* by moving only *terrour* and *pity*. Theſe are *Machins* that will not *play* as they ought, but by great *Thoughts* and noble *Expreſſions*, of which we are not indeed altogether ſo capable, as the *Greeks*. Perhaps our *Nation* which is naturally *Gallant*, has been oblig'd by the neceſſity of our *Character* to frame for our ſelves a new *Syſtem* of *Tragedy* to ſuit with our *humour*. The *Greeks*, who were *popular Eſtates*, and who hated *Monarchy*, took delight in their *Spectacles*, to ſee Kings humbled, and high Fortunes caſt down, becauſe the Exaltation griev'd them. The *Engliſh*, our *Neighbours*, love *Blood* in their *Sports*, by the quality of their Temperament: Theſe are *Inſulaires*, ſeparated from the reſt of men; we are more *humane*. *Gallantry* moreover agrees with our *Manners*; and our Poets believ'd that they could not ſucceed well on the *Theatre*, but by ſweet and tender *Sentiments*; in which, perhaps, they had ſome reaſon: for, in effect, the Paſſions repreſented become deform'd and inſipid, unleſs they are founded on *Sentiments* conformable to thoſe of the *Spectator*. 'Tis this that obliges our Poets to ſtand up ſo ſtrongly for the

the priviledge of *Gallantry* on the *Theatre*, and to bend all their *Subjects* to *Love* and *Tenderneſs*; the rather, to pleaſe the *Women*, who have made themſelves *Judges* of theſe *Divertiſements*, and uſurped the Right to paſs ſentence. And ſome beſides have ſuffer'd themſelves to be prepoſſeſs'd, and led by the *Spaniards*, who make all their *Cavaliers* amorous. 'Tis by them that *Tragedy* began to degenerate; and we by little and little accuſtom'd to ſee *Heroes* on the Theatre, ſmitten with another Love than that of *Glory*; and that by degrees all the *great Men* of Antiquity have loſt their Characters in our hands. 'Tis likewiſe perhaps by this *Gallantry* that our Age would deviſe a colour to excuſe the feebleneſs of our Wit; not being able to ſuſtain always the ſame Action by the greatneſs of Words and Thoughts. However it be; for I am not hardy enough to declare my ſelf againſt the Publick; 'tis to degrade *Tragedy* from that *majeſty* which is proper to it, to mingle in it *Love*, which is of a Character always *light*, and little ſuitable to that *Gravity* of which *Tragedy* makes profeſſion. Hence it proceeds that theſe *Tragedies* mixed with

with *Gallantries*, never make ſuch admirable impreſſions on the Spirit, as did thoſe of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*; for all the Bowels were moved by the great Objects of *Terrour* and *Pity* which they propoſed. 'Tis likewiſe for this, that the Reputation of our *modern Tragedies* ſo ſoon decays, and yield but ſmall delight at *two Years end*; whereas the *Greek* pleaſe yet to thoſe that have a good Taſte, after two thouſand Years; becauſe what is not *grave* and *ſerious* on the Theatre, though it give delight at preſent, after a ſhort time grows diſtaſteful, and unpleaſant; and becauſe, what is not proper for great Thoughts and great Figures in *Tragedy* cannot ſupport it ſelf. The *Ancients* who perceived this, did not interweave their *Gallantry* and *Love*, ſave in *Comedy*. For *Love* is of a Character that always degenerates from that *heroick Air*, of which Tragedy muſt never diveſt it ſelf. And nothing to me ſhews ſo mean and ſenſleſs, as for one to amuſe himſelf with *whining* about frivolous *kindneſſes*, when he may be *admirable* by *great* and *noble thoughts*, and *ſublime expreſſions*. But I dare not preſume ſo far on my own *capacity* and *credit*, to oppoſe my ſelf of my own head againſt

a uſage ſo eſtabliſhed. I muſt be content modeſtly to propoſe my Doubts; and that may ſerve to exerciſe the *Wits*, in an Age that only wants *Matter*. But to end this *Reflection* with a touch of *Chriſtianiſm*, I am perſwaded, that the innocence of the Theatre might be better preſerv'd according to the *Idea* of the *ancient Tragedy*: becauſe the *new* is become too effeminate, by the ſoftneſs of latter Ages; and the Prince *de Conty* who ſignaliz'd his Zeal againſt the *modern Tragedy*, by his Treatiſe on that Subject, would, without doubt, have allowed the *ancient*, becauſe that has nothing that may ſeem dangerous.

XXI.

THE other Faults of *modern Tragedy*, are ordinarily that either the *Subjects* which are choſen are mean and frivolous; or the *Fable* is not well wrought, and the *Contrivance* not regular; or that they are too much crowded with *Epiſodes*; or that the *Characters* are not preſerv'd and ſuſtain'd; or that the *Incidents* are not well prepar'd; or that the *Machins* are forced; or that, what is *admirable* fails in the *probability*, or

or the *probability* is too plain and flat; or that the *Surprizes* are ill manag'd, the *Knots* ill tied, the *looſing* them not *natural*, the *Cataſtrophes* precipitated, the *Thoughts* without *elevation*, the *Expreſſions* without *Majeſty*, the *Figures* without *grace*, the *Paſſions* without *colour*, the *Diſcourſe* without *Life*, the *Narrations* cold, the *Words* low, the *Language* improper, and all the *Beauties* falſe. They ſpeak not enough to the Heart of the *Audience*, which is the only *Art* of the Theatre, where nothing can be delightful but that which moves the Affections, and which makes impreſſion on the *Soul*; little known is that *Rhetorick* which can lay open the Paſſions by all the natural degrees of their birth, and of their progreſs; nor are thoſe Morals at all in uſe, which are proper to mingle theſe *different intereſts*, thoſe *oppoſite Glances*, thoſe *claſhing Maxims*, thoſe *Reaſons* that deſtroy each other, to ground the *Incertitudes* and *Irreſolutions*, and to animate the Theatre. For the Theatre being *eſſentially* deſtined for *action*, nothing ought to be idle, but all in agitation, by the thwarting of Paſſions that are founded on the different *intereſts* that ariſe; or by the embroil-

ment that follows from the *Intrigue*. Likewiſe there ought to appear no *Actor*, that carries not ſome Deſign in his Head, either to croſs the Deſigns of others, or to ſupport his own; all ought to be in trouble, and no calm to appear, till the *Action* be ended by the *Cataſtrophe*. Nor finally, is it well underſtood that it is not the *admirable Intrigue*, the ſurpriſing and wonderful *Events*, the extraordinary *Incidents* that make the *beauty* of a *Tragedy*, it is the *Diſcourſes* when they are natural and paſſionate. *Sophocles* was not more ſucceſsful than *Euripides* on the Theatre at *Athens*, but by the *Diſcourſe*; though the *Tragedies* of *Euripides* have more of *Action*, of *Morality*, of wonderful *Incidents*, than thoſe of *Sophocles*. It is by theſe Faults, more or leſs *great*, that *Tragedy* in theſe Days has ſo little effect on the Mind; that we no longer feel thoſe agreeable *Trances*, that make the pleaſure of the Soul, nor find thoſe *Suſpenſions*, thoſe *Raviſhments*, thoſe *Surpriſes*, thoſe *Admirations* that the *ancient Tragedy* caus'd; becauſe the *Modern* have nothing of thoſe *aſtoniſhing* and *terrible Objects* that *affrighted*, whilſt they *pleas'd* the *Spectators*, and made thoſe *great Impreſſions* on the *Soul*, by the

the miniſtry of the Paſſions. In theſe Days Men go from the Theatre as little mov'd as when they went in, and carry their *Heart* along with them, *untouch'd* as they brought it: ſo that the pleaſure they receive there, is become as ſuperficial, as that of *Comedy*, and our *graveſt* Tragedies are (to ſpeak properly) no more but *heighten'd Comedy*.

XXII.

IT is not but that the *Ancients* had likewiſe their Faults. *Æſchylus* had ſcarce any Principle for *Manners*, and for the *Decencies*; his *Fables* are too ſimple, the *Contrivance* wretched, the *Expreſſion* obſcure and blunder'd; ſcarce ought can be underſtood of his Tragedy of *Agamemnon*. But becauſe he believ'd that the Secret of the Theatre is to ſpeak *pompouſly*, he beſtow'd all his Art on the *words* without any regard to the *thoughts*. *Quintilian* ſays, that he is *ſublime* and *lofty* to *Extravagance*: in effect, he never ſpeaks in *cold blood*, and ſays the moſt indifferent Things in a *Tragick Huff*; likewiſe in the *Images* that he draws, the Colours are too *glaring*, and the ſtrokes too groſs. He, who writes

his Life, relates that in one of the *Chorus's* of his *Tragedy* of the *Eumenides*, he ſo horribly frighted the *Audience*, that the *Spectacle* made the *Children* ſwound, and the *Women* with Child ſuffer *Abortion*. Finally, his *Enthuſiaſm*, it ſeems, never left him, he is ſo exalted, and ſo little *natural*. *Sophocles* is too elaborate in his *Diſcourſe*, his *Art* is not enough hidden, in ſome of his Pieces, it lies too open and near the day; he ſometimes becomes *obſcure*, by his too great *Affectation* to be *ſublime*; and the *Nobleneſs* of his *Expreſſion*, is injurious to the *Perſpicuity*; his *Plots* are not all ſo happily *unravelled*, as that of the *Oedipus*. The *Diſcovery* in the *Ajax* anſwers not to the *Intrigue*; the Author ought not to have ended a *Spectacle* of that Terrour and Pity, with a *dull* and *frivolous Conteſt* about the *Sepulture* of *Ajax*, who then had ſlain himſelf. And in the ſame Piece that *Machin* of *Minerva* is too *violent*, who caſts an *Enchantment* over the Eyes of *Ajax*, to ſave *Ulyſſes*, whom *Ajax* would have kill'd, if he had known him. *Oedipus* ought not to have been *ignorant* of the *Aſſaſſinat* of the *King* of *Thebes*; the *Ignorance* he is in of the *Murder*, which makes all the *Beauty* of the

the *Intrigue*, is not *probable*. *Euripides* is not *exact* in the Contrivance of his *Fables*; his *Characters* want *Variety*, he falls often into the ſame *Thoughts*, on the ſame *Adventures*; he is not enough a *Religious Obſerver* of *Decencies*; and by a too great *Affectation* to be *moral* and *ſententious*, he is not ſo *ardent* and *paſſionate* as he ought to be; for this reaſon he goes not to the *Heart*, ſo much as *Sophocles*; there are *Precipitations* in the Preparation of his *Incidents*, as in the *Suppliants*, where Theſeus *levies an Army, marches from* Athens *to* Thebes, *and returns on the ſame day.* The *Diſcoveries* of his *Plots* are nothing *natural*, theſe are perpetual *Machins*; *Diana* makes the *Diſcovery* in the *Tragedy* of *Hippolitus*; *Minerva* that of the *Iphigenia* in *Taurica*; *Thetis* that of *Andromache*; *Caſtor* and *Pollux* that of *Helena*, and that of *Electra*; and ſo of others. After all, as theſe three Authors are the firſt *Models* of *Tragedy*, they are *great* in their *Deſigns*, *judicious* in their *Fables*, *paſſionate* in their *Expreſſions*; throughout in their *Works* predominates a *Genius*, *Nature*, and *good Senſe*. And though they are *guilty* of their *Faults*, yet it may be ſaid, that all which is of them is *Ori-*

ginal. The latter *Greeks* whereof *Epheſtion* ſpeaks, as *Lycophron*, *Soſitheus*, and the others that flouriſh'd under King *Ptolemy Philadelphus*; and the firſt *Latins*, as *Livius Andronicus*, *Accius Pacuvius*, who apply'd themſelves to *Tragedy*, had not any ſucceſs in that way. The *Romans*, for ſome time, took delight in *Comedy*. But ſo ſoon as the *polite Learning* was a little eſtabliſh'd at *Rome*, moſt part of the *great Men* employ'd themſelves in writing Tragedies. *Catullus* made one Tragedy of *Alcmeon*, out of which *Cicero* cites ſome Verſes in his *Lucullus*; *Gracchus* made *Thyeſtes*, whereof *Cenſorinus* makes mention; *Cæſar* made *Adraſtus*, whereof *Feſtus* ſpeaks; *Rutilius* made *Aſtyanax*, of which *Fulgentius* ſpeaks; *Mecænas* made *Octavia*, which *Priſcian* mentions; *Ovid* made *Medea*, of which *Quintilian* gives ſome account; and ſeeing that theſe Tragedies are loſt, no judgment can be made of them, but by the Merit of their Authors. But the Eſteem theſe *Great Men* had for this ſort of Poem then in a time when *good Senſe* ſo much ſway'd, may ſufficiently juſtifie Cardinal *Richelieu*, who was ſo infinitely affected with it; and he little authorizes the *Ignorance* at

Court

Court in theſe things, which is ſo much the *Mode* at this day. The only Tragedies that remain of the *Latins*, are thoſe of *Seneca*, who ſpeaks always well, but never ſpeaks *naturally*; his Verſe are pompous, his Thoughts lofty, becauſe he would dazzle; but the Contrivance of his *Fables* are of no great *Character*. This Author pleaſes himſelf too much in giving his *Idea's*, inſtead of *real Objects*; and he repreſents not always very regularly, what is to be repreſented. But it is not only in the Compoſition of Tragedy that the *Greeks* have excelled the *Romans*; it is alſo in the *Magnificence* of their Theatre, theſe People, however *conquer'd* they have been, have had *greater Thoughts* than their *Conquerours*; and *Plutarch* aſſures us, That the *Athenians* have been at greater Expences in the *Repreſentation* of their Tragedies, and in the *Rewards* they propos'd to thoſe Poets that ſucceeded well, than in all the *Wars* that ever they undertook for the *Defence* of their *Republick*; and they believ'd not this Expence unprofitable, ſince it was to inſpire the People with *Thoughts* conformable to the good of their *Eſtate*.

XXIII. The

XXIII.

THE following Ages became ſucceſſively ſo groſs one after another, that they could produce nothing in this kind of *Poeſie* worthy of any *Reflection*. The *Italians* and *Spaniards* of latter Ages, had their *Wit* too much *corrupted* with *Romances*, to ſuſtain the *Greatneſs* of the *Character* of *Tragedy*: notwithſtanding *Triſſino* would make his *Sophonisbe*, and *Taſſo* his *Toriſmondo*, after the *Pattern* of the *Tragedies* of *Sophocles*: but they could not reach that *Character*. The *Jephthes*, and *Baptiſtes* of *Buchanan*, contain little conſiderable, except the *Purity* of *Style* in which theſe *Tragedies* are written. The *Sedecias* of *Malapertus*, the *Criſpus* of *Stephonius*, the *Joſephus* of *Grotius*, the *Herod* of *Heinſius*, and the other *Tragedies* of the Learned *Men* of the laſt Age, have almoſt all of them a *Contrivance* too *ſimple*, the *Incidents* are *cold*, the *Narrations tedious*, the *Paſſions forc'd*, the *Style conſtrain'd*. The *Tragedies* of *Garnier*, *Rotrou*, *Serre*, and others of that time, are yet of a far *meaner Character*. The *Engliſh* have more of *Genius* for *Tragedy* than other People,

people, as well by the Spirit of their Nation which delights in Cruelty, as alſo by the Character of their Language which is proper for great Expreſſions. But the *French*, who have apply'd themſelves to *Tragedy* more than any others, have likewiſe writ with more ſucceſs; and this *ſucceſs* does ſtrongly authoriſe the uſe, as may be ſeen by ſo many *great Men* amongſt us, who daily ſignalize themſelves on the Theatre. But the *Whimſie* of theſe *Opera* of *Muſick*, wherewith the Publick are *infatuated*, will, perhaps, be capable to diſcourage them, if they be regarded. It remains to ſpeak of *Comedy*, that, of a *Lecture of Virtue* which it is *eſſentially*, is become, by the licentiouſneſs of theſe latter Times, a *School of Debauchery*: 'tis only to re-eſtabliſh it in its *natural eſtate*, as it ought to be, according to *Ariſtotle*, that I pretend to ſpeak. The reſt I leave to the *Zeal* of the *Preachers*, who are a little ſlack on this *Subject*.

XXIV.

SOme pretend that *Ariſtotle*, who has ſcarce ſaid any thing of *Comedy*, has ſaid all, making a Remark, that the *ridiculous*

diculous is to be handled in the ſame manner, as he has diſcours'd of the *grave* and *ſerious*; by the rule of proportion, that muſt be obſerv'd betwixt *Comedy* and *Tragedy*. That is to ſay, there muſt be obſerv'd in *Comedy*, as well as in *Tragedy*, the *decencies* of Places, of Times, of Perſons; that there muſt be employ'd all the colours, which ought to be the Seeds and the Principles of the Decency; that the Preparations of the *Incidents* ought to be conducted in ſuch ſort, that they ſerve not to render the Events cold, by taking from them what they may have of Advantage and Grace by the ſurprize: For it is of importance to conſider, that to prepare an *Incident* well, is not altogether to ſay things that may diſcover; but it is to ſay ſo much only as may give place to the *Audience*, to divine: which alſo ought to be ſparingly done. For the pleaſure of the Spectators is to expect always ſomething that may *ſurprize*, and that is contrary to their *Prejudgments*. And nothing ought to be predominant on the Theatre ſo much as the *ſuſpenſion*, becauſe the chief delight to be receiv'd there, is the *ſurprize*.

XXV. *Co-*

XXV.

Comedy is an image of *common Life*; its end is to ſhew on the Stage the faults of particulars, in order to amend the faults of the Publick, and to correct the People through a fear of being render'd ridiculous. So that which is moſt proper to excite Laughter, is that which is moſt eſſential to *Comedy*. One may be ridiculous in *words*, or ridiculous in *things*: There is an honeſt laughter, and a *buffoon* laughter. 'Tis meerly a gift of Nature to make every thing ridiculous. For all the actions of Human life have their *fair* and their *wrong* ſide, their *ſerious* and their *ridiculous*. But *Ariſtotle*, who gives Precepts to make Men weep, leaves none to make them laugh. This proceeds purely from the *Genius*; Art and Method have little to do with it, 'tis the work of Nature alone. The *Spaniards* have a *Genius* to diſcern the *ridiculous* of things much better than the *French*; and the *Italians*, who are naturally *Comedians*, expreſs it better; their Tongue is more proper for it, by a drolling *tone* peculiar to them. The *French* may be capable of *it*, when their Language

guage has attain'd its perfection. Finally, that pleaſant *turn*, that *gaiety* which can ſuſtain the delicacy of his character, without falling into *coldneſs*, nor into *buffoonry*: that *fine raillery*, which is the *Flower of Wit*, is the Talent which *Comedy* demands: but it muſt always be obſerv'd, that the true *ridiculous* of Art, for the entertainment on the *Theatre*, ought to be no other but the Copy of the *ridiculous* that is found in Nature. *Comedy* is as it ſhould be, when the Spectator believes himſelf really in the company of ſuch perſons as he has repreſented, and takes himſelf to be in a Family whilſt he is at the *Theatre*; and that he there ſees nothing but what he ſees in the *World*. For *Comedy* is worth nothing at all, unleſs he know, and can compare the *manners* that are exhibited on the Stage, with thoſe of ſuch perſons as he has converſation withal. 'Twas by this that *Menander* had ſo great ſucceſs amongſt the *Grecians*; and the *Romans* thought themſelves in *Converſation*, whilſt they ſat beholding the Comedies of *Terence*; for they perceiv'd nothing but what they had been accuſtom'd to find in ordinary Companies. 'Tis the great Art of *Comedy*, to keep cloſe to Na-

Nature, and never leave it; to have common Thoughts and Expreſſions fitted to the capacity of all the World. For it is moſt certainly true, that the moſt groſs ſtrokes of *Nature*, whatever they be, pleaſe always more than the moſt delicate, that are not *Natural:* nevertheleſs baſe and vulgar terms are not to be permitted on the Theatre, unleſs ſupported by ſome kind of Wit. The *Proverbs* and *Wiſe Sayings* of the People ought not to be ſuffer'd, unleſs they have ſome pleaſant meaning, and unleſs they are Natural. This is the moſt general Principle of *Comedy*; by which, whatever is repreſented, cannot fail to pleaſe; but without it, nothing. 'Tis only by adhering to Nature, that the *probability* can be maintain'd, which is the ſole infallible guide, that may be followed on the *Theatre.* Without *probability* all is lame and faulty, with it all goes well: None can run aſtray who follow it; and the moſt ordinary faults of *Comedy* happen from thence, that the *Decencies* are not well obſerv'd, nor the *Incidents* enough prepar'd. 'Tis likewiſe neceſſary to take heed that the *colours* employ'd to prepare the *Incidents*, be not too groſs, to leave to the Spectator

tor the Pleaſure of finding out himſelf what they ſignifie. But the moſt ordinary weakneſs of our *Comedies* is the *unravelling*; ſcarce ever any ſucceed well in that, by the difficulty there is in *untying* happily that knot which had been tyed. It is eaſie to *wind* up an Intrigue, 'tis only the work of Fancy; but the *unravelling* is the pure and perfect work of the Judgment. 'Tis this that makes the ſucceſs difficult, and if one would thereon make a little reflection, he might find that the moſt univerſal fault of *Comedies*, is, that the *Cataſtrophe* of it is not *Natural*. It reſts to examine, Whether in *Comedy* the Images may be drawn *greater* than the *Natural*, the more to move the Minds of the *Spectators*, by more ſhining portracts, and by ſtronger impreſſions? That is to ſay, Whether a Poet may make a *Miſer* more covetous, a *moroſe man* more moroſe and troubleſom than the original? To which I anſwer, That *Plautus*, who ſtudied to pleaſe the *common People*, made them ſo; but *Terence*, who would pleaſe the *better ſort*, confin'd himſelf within the bounds of Nature, and he repreſented Vices, without making them either better or worſe. Notwithſtanding theſe *extravagant characters*, ſuch as

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The Citizen turn'd Gentleman, and *the Sick in imagination of Moliere*, fail'd not of *ſucceſs* a little while ago at Court, where all the *taſts* are ſo delicate; but all things there are well receiv'd, even to the divertiſements of the *Provinces*, if they have any *air* of *Plaiſanterie*; for there they love to *laugh*, rather than to *admire*. Theſe are the moſt important Rules of *Comedy*. Now ſee thoſe who have been famous for this kind of writing.

XXVI.

THE principal amongſt the *Greeks*, are *Ariſtophanes* and *Menander*; the chief amongſt the *Latins*, are *Plautus* and *Terence*. *Ariſtophanes* is not exact in the contrivance of his Fables, his Fictions are not very probable; he mocks perſons too groſly, and too openly. *Socrates*, whom he plays upon ſo eagerly in his *Comedies*, had a more delicate *air* of *Raillery* than he; but was not ſo *ſhameleſs*. It is true, *Ariſtophanes* writ during the diſorder and licentiouſneſs of the old Comedy, and that he underſtood the humour of the *Athenian* People, who were eaſily diſguſted with the

merit of extraordinary perſons, whom he ſet his Wit to abuſe, that he might pleaſe that People. After all, he often is no otherwiſe pleaſant than by his Buffoonry. That *Ragouſt* compos'd of ſeventy ſix ſyllables in the laſt Scene of his Comedy the *Eccleſiaſouſai*, would not go down with us in our Age. His language is often obſcure, blunder'd, low, trivial, and his frequent jingling upon *words*, his contradictions of *oppoſite terms* each to other; the hotchpotch of his *ſtile*, of *Tragick* and *Comick*, of *ſerious* and *buffoon*, of *grave* and *familiar*, is ugly; and his *Witticiſms*, often when near examin'd, prove falſe. *Menander* is pleaſant in a more commendable manner; his ſtile is *pure*, *neat*, *ſhining*, *natural*; he perſwades like an *Orator*, and inſtructs like a *Philoſopher*. And if one may ground a true Judgment on the Fragments that remain of this Author, one may find that he made very pleaſant images of the *Civil Life*; that he makes men ſpeak according to their character; that one may find himſelf in the portracts he made of Manners, becauſe he keeps cloſe to Nature, and enters into the thoughts of the perſons he makes to ſpeak. Finally, *Plutarch*, in the com-

compariſon he has made of theſe two Authors, ſays, that *the Muſe of* Ariſtophanes *is like an impudent, and that of* Menander *reſembles a virtuous Woman.* For the two *Latin Comick Poets*, *Plautus* is ingenious in his deſigns, happy in his imaginations, fruitful in his invention; yet there are ſome inſipid Jeſts that eſcape from him in the *taſte* of *Horace*; and his *good ſayings* that make the People laugh, make ſometimes the honeſter ſort to pity him: 'tis true, he ſays the *beſt* things in the World, and yet very often he ſays the moſt wretched; this a man is ſubject to, when he endeavours to be too witty; he will make laughter by *extravagant expreſſions*, and *hyperboles*, when he cannot be ſucceſsful to make it by things. *Plautus* is not altogether ſo regular in the *contrivance* of his pieces, nor in the *diſtribution* of the acts; but he is more ſimple in his *ſubjects*: for the *Fables* of *Terence* are ordinarily compounded, as is ſeen in the *Andria* which contains two *Loves*. This is what was objected to *Terence*, that he made one *Latin Comedy* of two *Greek*, the more to animate his *Theatre*. But then the *Plots* are more naturally *unravell'd* than thoſe of *Plautus*; as thoſe of

Plautus are more natural than thoſe of *Ariſtophanes*. And though *Cæſar* call *Terence* a *diminutive Menander*, becauſe he only had the ſweetneſs and the ſmoothneſs, but had not the force and vigor, yet he has writ in a *manner* ſo natural, and ſo judicious, that of a *Copy*, as he was, he is become an *original*; for never man had ſo clear an inſight into Nature. I ſhall ſpeak nothing of *Lucilius*, of whom nothing now is left but *Fragments*. All we know of him, is what *Varro* relates, that he was happy in the Subjects that he choſe: but never perſon had a better *Genius* for *Comedy*, than the *Spaniard Lope de Vega*; he had copious Wit joyn'd with great advantages of Nature, and an admirable facility; for he has compos'd more than Three hundred *Comedies*; his Name alone gave Applauſe to his Pieces, ſo ſtrongly was his Reputation eſtabliſh'd: and it was ſufficient that a work came from his Hands, to merit the *publick approbation*. But he had a Wit too vaſt to be confin'd to Rules, or admit of any Bounds; 'twas this oblig'd him to abandon himſelf to the ſwing of his *Genius*, becauſe he might always relye on it. He never conſulted other Commentary but

but the *guſt* of his *Auditors*, and govern'd himſelf by the *ſucceſs* of his pieces, rather than by *reaſon*. Thus he diſengag'd himſelf of all the Scruples of *Unity*, and the Superſtitions of *Probability*. But as moſt commonly he is for *refining* upon the *ridiculous*, and wou'd be too *witty*, his Fancies are often *more fortunate* than they are *juſt*, and have more of the *Droll*, than they have of what is *Natural*; for by too much ſubtlety in his *Drollery*, his Wit becomes falſe, by reaſon 'tis forc'd to be too delicate; and his Graces become cold, by being *too fine*: but amongſt the *French*, never any carried *Comedy* ſo high as *Moliere*. For the ancient *Comick Poets* had only the *folk* of the Family to make mirth with on the Theatre; but *Moliere*'s fools in the Play are the *Marquiſes*, and the perſons of Quality; others have been content to play upon the common and Country converſation in *their Comedies*; *Moliere* has made bold with all *Paris*, and the Court. He is the only man amongſt *them* who has diſcover'd thoſe lines of Nature that diſtinguiſh and make her known. The beauties of the *Portracts* he draws are ſo *natural*, that they *make* themſelves perceiv'd by *the groſſeſt* Ap-

prehenſions: and his Talent of being pleaſant, is improv'd one half the more, by that he has of counterfeiting to the life. His *Miſantrope*, in my opinion, is the moſt *compleat character*, and withal, the moſt ſingular that ever appear'd on the Theatre. But the *contrivance* of his *Comedies* is always defective in ſomething, and his *Plots* are never handſomly *unravel'd*. This is what may be ſaid in general of *Comedy*.

XXVII.

THE *Eclogue* is the moſt conſiderable of the *little Poems*; it is an image of the life of *Shepherds*. Therefore the *matter* is low, and nothing great is in the *Genius* of it; its buſineſs is to deſcribe the *loves*, the *ſports*, the *piques*, the *jealouſies*, *the diſputes*, the *quarrels*, the *intrigues*, the *paſſions*, the *adventures*, and all the *little affairs of Shepherds*. So that its *character* muſt be ſimple, the *wit* eaſie, the *expreſſion* common; it muſt have nothing that is exquiſite, neither in the thoughts, nor in the words, nor in any *faſhions of ſpeech*; in which the *Italians*, who have writ in this kind of *Verſe*, have been

been *miſtaken:* for they always aim at being *witty*, and to ſay things *too finely.* The true *character* of the *Eclogue* is ſimplicity, and modeſty: its *figures* are ſweet, the *paſſions* tender, the *motions* eaſie; and tho' ſometimes it may be *paſſionate*, and have *little tranſports*, and *little deſpairs*, yet it never riſes ſo high as to be fierce or violent; its *Narrations* are ſhort, *Deſcriptions* little, the *Thoughts* ingenious, the *Manners* innocent, the *Language* pure, the *Verſe* flowing, the *Expreſſions* plain, and all the *Diſcourſe* natural; for this is not a great *talker* that loves to make a noiſe. The Models to be propoſed to write well in this ſort of *Poeſie*, are *Theocritus* and *Virgil.* *Theocritus* is more *ſweet*, more *natural*, more *delicate*, by the character of the *Greek* Tongue. *Virgil* is more judicious, more exact, more regular, more modeſt, by the *character* of his own *Wit*, and by the *Genius* of the *Latin* Tongue. *Theocritus* hath more of all the Graces that make the ordinary beauty of *Poetry*; *Virgil* has more of *good ſenſe*, more *vigor*, more *nobleneſs*, more *modeſty.* After all, *Theocritus* is the Original, *Virgil* is only the Copy: though ſome things he hath copied ſo happily, that they equal the Original in

many places. *Moſchus* and *Bion*, who writ in this ſort of Verſe, have likewiſe great *Excellencies*, and very great *Delicacies* in their *Idyllia*. The other Poets, who have writ *Eclogues*, as *Nemeſianus*, who was an *African*, and *Calphurnius* the *Sicilian* writ very meanly. The *Italians*, as *Bonarelli*, *Guarini*, Cavalier *Marino*; the *Spaniards*, as *Luis de Gongora*, *Camoens*, have little of *Natural* in their *Paſtorals*, their *Idyllia*, and their *Eclogues*; and *Ronſard*, amongſt the *French*, hath nothing *tender* or *delicate*. The *French* Tongue, however *perfect* it pretends to be, hath produc'd nothing in this kind of Verſe comparable to the *Eclogues* of *Virgil*; neither yet, it ſeems, has it force enough to expreſs things ſo naturally to the *Life*, and to ſuſtain that great *Simplicity* of the *Bucolique* Verſe, ſo *nobly* as the *Greek* and *Latin* Tongue; for the *Greek* and *Latin* have a certain *Character* of *Majeſty* that *ſhines* even in the *ſmalleſt* things. The *Idea* of *Paſtoral Comedies*, for which the *Italians* have had ſo great liking, is taken from the *Cyclops* of *Euripides*. *The Greeks*, ſaith *Horace*, *began to bring Satyrs on the Theatre, to temper the Auſterity of their Tragedy.*

XXVIII.

XXVIII.

THE *principal End* of *Satyr*, is to *inſtruct* the People by diſcrediting Vice. It may therefore be of great *Advantage* in a *State*, when taught to keep within its bounds. But as *Flatterers* embroil themſelves with the *Publick*, whilſt they ſtrive too much to pleaſe *Particulars*; ſo it happens, that the Writers of *Satyr* diſ-oblige ſometimes *Particulars*, whilſt they endeavour too much to pleaſe the *Publick*: and as downright *Praiſes* are too groſs; *Satyr* that takes off the *Maſk*, and reprehends *Vice* too openly, is not very *delicate*; but though it be more difficult to *praiſe*, than to *blame*, becauſe it is eaſier to diſcover in People what may be turn'd into *ridiculous*, than to underſtand their *Merit*; 'tis requiſite notwithſtanding equally to have a *Wit* for the one, as for the other. For the ſame *Delicacies* of *Wit*, that is *neceſſary* to him who *praiſeth*, to purge his *Praiſes* from what is *deform'd*, is *neceſſary* to him who *blameth*, to clear the *Satyr* from what is *bitter* in it. And this *Delicacy* which properly gives the reliſh

reliſh to *Satyr*, was heretofore the *Character* of *Horace*, for it was only by the way of *Jeſt* and *Merriment* that he exercis'd his *Cenſure*. For he knew full well, that the *ſporting* of *Wit*, hath more effect than the *ſtrongeſt Reaſons*, and the moſt *ſententious Diſcourſe*, to render Vice *ridiculous*. In which *Juvenal*, with all his *Serioufneſs*, has ſo much ado to ſucceed. For indeed that violent manner of *Declamation* which throughout he makes uſe of, has, moſt commonly, but very little effect, he ſcarce perſwades at all; becauſe he is always in Choler, and never ſpeaks in *cold Blood*. 'Tis true, he has ſome *common Places* of *Morality* that may ſerve to dazzle the weaker ſort of *Apprehenſions*. But with all his ſtrong *Expreſſions*, *Energetick Terms*, and great *Flaſhes* of *Eloquence*, he makes little *Impreſſion*; becauſe he has nothing that is *delicate*, or that is *natural*. It is not a true Zeal that makes him talk againſt the *Miſdemeanors* of his Age, 'tis a *Spirit* of Vanity and Oſtentation. *Perſius*, who to the *Gravity* and *Vehemence* of *Juvenal* had join'd obſcurity, caus'd by the *Affectation* he had to appear *Learned*, has no better ſucceſs; becauſe he yields no delight: not but that

that he has, however, ſome *Touches* of an hidden *Delicacy*; but theſe *Strokes* are always wrapp'd up in ſuch a profound *Learning*, that there needs a *Comment* to unfold them; he ſpeaks not but with *ſadneſs*, what by *Horace* is ſaid with the greateſt *Mirth* imaginable, whom ſometimes he would imitate; his *Moroſeneſs* ſcarce ever leaves him; he ſpeaks not of the leaſt things but in a *Heat*; and he never ſports, but after the moſt ſerious manner in the World. The *Satyr* which *Seneca* made on the *Apotheoſis* of the Emperour *Claudius*, is of a much different Character, 'tis one of the moſt *delicate Pieces* of *Antiquity*: and the Author, who otherwiſe throughout ſuſtains the *Gravity* of a *Philoſopher* by the cold Blood of his *Temperament*, and by all the *Grimaces* and *Severity* of his *Morals*: ſeems ſo much the more pleaſant in this, as he is more *grave* and more *ſerious* in all his other Works. Moſt part of the *Dialogues* of *Lucian*, are *Satyrs* of this kind; the Authour is a pleaſant *Buffoon*, who makes *Sport* with the moſt *ſerious Matters*, and inſolently plays upon whatever is *great* in the *World*: he is on all Occaſions infinitely *witty*; but this, I confeſs, is a kind of fooliſh *Character*,

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We have two *modern Satyrs* writ in *Proſe*, much-what of the ſame *Air*, which ſurpaſs all that has been writ of this kind in theſe latter *Ages*. The firſt is *Spaniſh*, compos'd by *Cervantes*, Secretary to the Duke of *Alva*. This *great Man* having been ſlighted, and received ſome Diſgrace by the Duke of *Lerma* chief Miniſter of State to *Philip* III, who had no reſpect for Men of Learning, writ the *Romance* of *Don Quixot*, which is a moſt *fine* and *ingenious Satyr* on his own Country; becauſe the Nobility of *Spain*, whom he renders ridiculous by this Work, were all bit in the Head, and intoxicated with Knight-errantry. This is a *Tradition* I have from one of my Friends, who learn'd this *Secret* from *Don Lope*, whom *Cervantes* had made the *Confident* of his Reſentment. The other *Satyr* is *French*, made in the time of the *League*, where the Author very pleaſantly teaches the Publick the Intentions of the *Houſe* of *Guiſe* for the *Religion*: throughout this *Work* is ſpread a *Delicacy* of *Wit*, that fails not to ſhine amongſt the rude and groſſer ways of Expreſſions of thoſe Times: and the little Verſes ſcattered here and there in the Work, are of a Character that is moſt

moſt *fine*, and moſt *natural*. The *Satyr* of *Rablais*, however witty it be; nevertheleſs is ſtuff'd with ſo much *Ribaldry*, and is ſo little conformable to the *refinedneſs* of this preſent *Age* we live in, that I think it not worthy to be read by *Gentlemen*, no more than the *Satyrs* of *Regnier*, though he has wit enough; for he is too impudent, and obſerves no *Decency*.

XXIX.

THE *Elegy*, by the quality of its name, is deſtined to *Tears* and *Complaints*: and therefore ought to be of a *doleful* Character. But afterwards it has been uſed in Subjects of Tenderneſs, as in *Love-matters*, and the like. The *Latins* have been more ſucceſsful therein (by what appears to us) than the *Greeks*. For little remains to us of *Philetas* and *Tyrtæus*, who were famous in *Greece* for this kind of *Verſe*. They who have writ *Elegy* beſt amongſt the *Latins*, are *Tibullus*, *Propertius*, and *Ovid*. *Tibullus* is Elegant and Polite, *Propertius* noble and high; but *Ovid* is to be prefer'd to both; becauſe he is more natural, more moving,

moving, and more paſſionate; and thereby he has better expreſs'd the Character of *Elegy* than the others. Some *Elegies* are left us of *Catullus*, of *Mecænas*, and *Cornelius Gallus*, which are of a great purity, and are exceedingly delicate; but the *Verſe* of *Catullus* and *Mecænas* have too much ſoftneſs, and a *negligence* too *affected:* thoſe of *Cornelius Gallus* are more round, and ſupport themſelves better. In theſe latter Ages have appear'd a *German* named *Lotichius*, an *Italian* called *Molſa*, a *Flemming* call'd *Sidronius*, who have writ *Elegies* with great Elegancy. I ſpeak not of the *French Elegies*, it is a kind of *Verſe* which they diſtinguiſh not from *Heroick*; and they call *indifferently Elegy*, what they pleaſe, whereby the diſtinction of the true Chacter of this *Verſe* ſeems not yet well eſtabliſh'd amongſt them.

XXX.

THE *Ode* ought to have as much *nobleneſs*, *elevation*, and *tranſport*, as the *Eclogue* has of ſimplicity and modeſty. 'Tis not only the *Wit* that heightens it, but likewiſe the *Matter*. For its uſe

uſe is to ſing the *Praiſes* of the *Gods*, and to celebrate the *illuſtrious Actions* of *great Men*, ſo it requires to ſuſtain all the *Majeſty* of its *Character*, an *exalted Nature*, a great *Wit*, a daring *Fancy*, an expreſſion *noble* and *ſparkling*, yet *pure*, and *correct*. All the *briskneſs* and *life* which *Art* has by its *Figures*, is not ſufficient to heighten *Ode* ſo far as its Character requires. But the reading alone of *Pindar*, is more capable to inſpire this *Genius* than all my *Reflections*. He is great in his *Deſigns*, vaſt in his *thoughts*, bold in his *imaginations*, happy in his *Expreſſions*, eloquent in his *Diſcourſe*: but his *great vivacity* hurries him ſometimes paſt his *judgment*, he gives himſelf too much ſwing; his *Panegyricks* are perpetual *Digreſſions*, where rambling from his *Subject*, he carries the *Readers* from *Fables* to *Fables*, from *Alluſions* to *Alluſions*, from *Chimera's* to *Chimera's*; for 'tis the moſt unbridled and irregular *Fancy* in the World. But this irregularity is one part of the Character of the *Ode*, the Nature and *Genius* of it requiring Tranſport. *Pindar* likewiſe is the only Perſon amongſt the *Greeks*, that acquired *Glory* by this ſort of Writing, for little is remaining

of

of the other Nine *Lyrick Poets*, whereof *Petronius* ſpeaks. Nevertheleſs it may be avowed by that which is left us of the *Fragments* of *Sappho*, that *Demetrius* and *Longinus* have great reaſon to boaſt ſo highly in their Works of the admirable *Genius* of this *Woman*; for there are found ſome ſtrokes of Delicacy the moſt *fine*, and the moſt paſſionate in the World. None can judge with any certainty of the others, of whom we have ſo little. *Anacreon* alone is capable to comfort us for the loſs of their Works. For his *Odes* are *Flowers*, *Beauties*, and *Graces* perpetual: it is ſo familiar to him to write what is *natural*, and to the *life*; and he has an *Air* ſo delicate, ſo eaſie, and ſo graceful; that there is nothing comparable in all *Antiquity* in the way he took, and in that kind of writing he followed. *Horace* found the Art to joyn all the force and high flights of *Pindar*, to all the *ſweetneſs* and *delicacy* of *Anacreon*, to make himſelf a new Character by uniting the *Perfections* of the other two. For beſides that he had a *Wit* naturally *pleaſant*, it was alſo *great*, *ſolid*, and *ſublime*; he had *nobleneſs* in his Conceits, and *delicacy* in his *Thoughts* and *Sentiments*: the parts of his *Odes* that

that he was willing to finiſh, are always *Maſter-pieces*; but it requires a very clear Apprehenſion to diſcern all his Wit: for there are many *ſecret Graces*, and *hidden Beauties* in his *Verſe*, that very few can diſcover: He alſo is the onely *Latin Author* who writ well in that *Verſe* amongſt the *Ancients*; and none could ever follow him, his *Genius* went ſo high. *Boetius* made ſome little *Odes*, which he ſcatter'd in his Work of *the Conſolation of Philoſophy*. But for all the *politeneſs* of his *Wit*, he could not ſurmount the *bad Air* that was then predominant; and what is moſt Elegant in him, is only a falſe *Beauty*, ſuitable to the *Genius of the Age* in which he writ. Amongſt the *Latin Lyricks* of latter times, I find three, that diſtinguiſh themſelves from the reſt, *Caſimire Sarbieuski* a *Pole*, *Dunkan de Ceriſantes* and *Magdalenet*, both *French*. *Sarbieuski* is lofty, but not pure; *Magdalenet* is pure, but not lofty; *Ceriſantes* in his *Odes* has joyn'd both, for he Writes *nobly*, and in a *Style* ſufficiently *pure*; but he has not ſo much *flame* as *Caſimire*, who had a great deal of Wit; and of that happy Wit, which makes Poets. *Buchanan* has *Odes* comparable to thoſe of *Antiquity*; but he hath great

unevenneſſes by the mixture of his Character, which is not *uniform* enough. *Muret* and *Vida* have a Fancy too limited; and their *Idea* ſeems conſtrain'd, whilſt too ſcrupulouſly they are addicted to *Latinity*. *Chiabrera* has had great Reputation by his *Odes* amongſt the *Italians*; and *Ronſard* amongſt the *French*, for *Ronſard* is noble and great; but this *Greatneſs* becomes *deform'd* and *odious*, by his *affectation* to appear learn'd; for he diſplays his *Scholarſhip* even to his *Miſtreſs*. *Malherb* is exact and correct; but he *ventures nothing*: and affecting to be too *diſcreet*, is often *cold*. *Theophile* has a great *Fancy* and little *Senſe*. He has ſome *fortunate boldneſſes*, becauſe he permits himſelf all. *Voiture* and *Sarazin* have *gay* things in their *Odes*; for they have the art of *Drolling* pleaſantly on mean *Subjects*, and they ſuſtain this Character well enough, but they have not *vigour* and *ſublimity* for high *Matters*; moſt part of the others who have writ after them in *Lyrick Verſe*, of which have been made ſo many *Collections*, have pitch'd upon a falſe *delicacy* of *expreſſion*, which carries them afar off from the true Character of the *Ode*, which is the *Greatneſs* and *Majeſty* of *Diſcourſe*, and

and they flag in a ſhameful *Mediocrity*: their Verſes were flat, and had nothing of that heat, and that noble *Air*, ſo eſſential to the *Ode*, which ought to ſay nothing *low* or *common*. I might ſpeak with more advantage of thoſe who write at this preſent, if I had not impos'd a Law on my ſelf not to intermeddle in giving judgment of the *Living*, which would be too much confidence in me, beſides the indiſcretion.

XXXI.

THE *Epigram* of all the *Works* in *Verſe* that *Antiquity* has produc'd, is the leaſt conſiderable; yet this too has its *Beauty*. This *Beauty* conſiſts either in the *delicate turn*, or in a *lucky word*. The *Greeks* have underſtood this ſort of *Poeſie* otherwiſe than the *Latins*. The *Greek Epigram* runs upon the *turn* of a Thought that is *natural*, but *fine* and *ſubtile*. The *Latin Epigram*, by a falſe *taſte* that ſway'd in the beginning of the decay of the pure *Latinity*, endeavours to ſurprize the Mind by ſome *nipping word*, which is call'd a *Point*. *Catullus* writ after the former manner,

which is of a *finer* Character; for he endeavours to cloſe a natural Thought within a delicate *turn* of words, and within the ſimplicity of a very ſoft expreſſion. *Martial* was in ſome manner the Author of this other way; that is to ſay, to terminate an ordinary Thought by ſome Word that is ſurpriſing. After all, Men of a good *taſte*, prefer'd the way of *Catullus*, before that of *Martial*; there being more of *true delicacy* in that, than in this. And in theſe latter Ages we have ſeen a noble *Venetian* named *Andreas Naugerius*, who had an exquiſite diſcernment, and who by a natural *antipathy* againſt all that which is called *point*, which he judg'd to be of an ill reliſh, ſacrific'd every year in Ceremony a Volume of *Martial*'s *Epigrams* to the *Manes* of *Catullus*, in Honour to his Character, which he judg'd was to be prefer'd to that of *Martial*. I find nothing to ſay conſiderable on the *Epigramitiſts* of latter Ages. 'Tis one of the ſorts of Verſe, in which a man has little ſucceſs; for it is a *meer lucky hit*, if it prove well. An *Epigram* is little worth, unleſs it be admirable; and it is ſo rare to make them *admirable*, that 'tis ſufficient to have made one in a Man's life.

XXX. It

XXXII.

IT remains to ſpeak of the *Madrigal*, the *Rondelay*, the *Sonnet*, the *Ballad*, and all the other little Verſe, that are the invention of theſe latter Ages; but as a little *fancy* may ſuffice, to be ſucceſsful in theſe kind of Works, without any *Genius*, I ſhall not amuſe my ſelf in making *Reflections* on the method that is to be obſerv'd in compoſing them: not but that he who has a *Genius*, would have a much different ſucceſs, either by a more *happy turn* he gives to what he writes, or by a more *lively air*, or by more *natural beauties*; or finally, by more *delicate* faſhions of ſpeech; and generally, the *Genius* makes the greateſt diſtinction in whatſoever work a Man undertakes. The *Character* of the ſmaller Verſe, and of all the little Works of *Poeſie*, requires that they be *natural*, together with a delicacy; for ſeeing the little Subjects afford no beauty of themſelves, the Wit of the Poet muſt ſupply that want out of its own ſtock. The *Sonnet* is of a Character that may receive more of *greatneſs* in its expreſſion

than the other little pieces; but nothing is more eſſential to it, than the happy and natural turn of the *Thought* that compoſes it. The *Rondelay* and *Madrigal* are moſt wretched, if they be not moſt elegant; and all their beauty conſiſts in the *turn* that is given them. But it ſuffices to know what this *delicacy* is, that ought to be the Character of theſe ſmall pieces, to underſtand all that belongs to them. A *word* may be delicate ſeveral ways; either by a ſubtile *equivocation*, which contains a myſtery in the ambiguity; or by a *hidden meaning*, which ſpeaks all out, whilſt it pretends to ſay nothing; or by ſome fierce and *bold ſtroke* under modeſt terms; or by ſomething *brisk and pleaſant*, under a ſerious ayre; or, laſtly, by ſome *fine thought*, under a ſimple and homely expreſſion. We find all theſe manners of delicacy in ſome of the Ancients, as in the *Socrates* of *Plato*, in *Sappho*, in *Theocritus*, in *Anacreon*, in *Horace*, in *Catullus*, in *Petronius*, and in *Martial*, theſe are all great Models of this Character; of which the *French* have only in their Tongue *Marot*, Gentleman of the Chamber to *Francis* the Firſt. He had an admirable *Genius* for this way of writing;

and

and whoever have been ſucceſsful in it ſince, have only copied him. *Voiture* had a nature for this character; if he had not a little corrupted his Wit by the reading of the *Spaniards* and *Italians*. If theſe *Words* are *affected*, they loſe their grace, becauſe they become cold and flat, when they are far-fetch'd. But the moſt *general fault* in theſe little pieces of Verſe, is, when one would cram them with too much Wit. This is the ordinary Vice of the *Spaniards* and *Italians*, who labour always to ſay *things finely*. This is no very good character; for they ceaſe to be *natural*, whilſt they take care to be *witty*. This is the fault of *Quevedo*, in his work of the *nine Muſes*, of *Gongora* in his *Romances*, of *Preti* and *Teſti* in their little Verſe, of *Marino* in his *Idyllia*, of *Acquillini* in his *Madrigals*, and of all the other Strangers, who would *refine* by falſe *Idea*'s of far-fetch'd Ornaments, and by affectations of Wit, which have nothing of the ſolid character, and the good ſenſe of the *Ancients*. Every ſmall *Genius* is apt to run into this Vice, of which the late *Collections* of the *French Poeſies* are full, where the Poets force themſelves to be *witty* in ſpite of their *Genius*; for they ei-

ther never ſay things as they ought to be ſaid; or they ſay nothing in the great Diſcourſes; or they load with ornaments Subjects that are not capable to ſuffer any; or they diſcover all their Art, when it ſhould be conceal'd; or they give themſelves over to the beauty of their Nature without method; or finally, they loſe themſelves in their *Idea*'s, becauſe they have not ſtrength to execute handſomly what their *Fancy* dictates to them.

XXXIII.

WERE I of a humour to decide, I might add to theſe *Reflections* the ſolution of ſome difficulties in the uſe of *French Poeſie*, that to me ſeem worthy to be clear'd. The firſt is concerning the *tranſpoſition of words*, which ſome Poets ſeem to affect in the *great Poems*, as a kind of figure, which they pretend to make uſe of to give more force and nobleneſs to their *Diſcourſe*. But *Ronſard*, in the Preface of his Poem of the *Franciad*, is not of that opinion. For he believes not the *French* Tongue to have a character proper to bear in its ex-

expreſſion, that ſort of *Tranſpoſitions.* In effect, it is too ſimple and too plain to wind about the words, and give them another order than that of the natural ſenſe, which they ought to have. I refer to thoſe who underſtand good ſpeaking, better than I do. The ſecond difficulty is the uſe of *Thou* and *Thee*, which the Poets employ when they ſpeak to GOD, or to the King. This uſe to me ſeems neither founded on Authority, nor on Reaſon. For beſides that the Authority of the *Latin* Tongue, on which they build, is a falſe foundation; becauſe that Tongue equally uſes *Thou* and *Thee* in Proſe and in Verſe, for all ſort of perſons; our Tongue is of it ſelf of a character ſo *reſpectful*, that it cannot be content with thoſe terms, for perſons to whom it would give *Honour.* But nothing to me appears more ſtrong againſt this uſe, than the *manner* which the Poets themſelves practiſe. For thoſe who ſay *Thou* and *Thee* to God, and to great perſons, never ſpeak ſo to their *Miſtreſſes*, becauſe they believe that would want *reſpect.* 'Tis true, that *Theophile* has *ſaid ſo* to his, but this was *ſaid* no more after the Language became *poliſh'd*; and *Voiture* never us'd it. This

is

is a ſcruple I have, and which I leave to the *Criticks* to examine. The third difficulty is the uſe of *Metaphors*; for the *French* Tongue is eſſentially ſo *ſcrupulous*, that it allows nothing but what is modeſt, and the leaſt thing of boldneſs offends its Modeſty. But this would be too great a delicacy to forbid *Metaphors* to Poets, with the ſame rigor as to *Orators*. There are *Metaphors* authoriz'd by uſe, which *Poeſie* cannot paſs by. It behoves a Poet to uſe them diſcreetly, without *ſhocking* the Modeſty of our Language. It requires a great Judgment to diſtinguiſh what ought to be ſaid in *proper terms*, and what in *metaphorical*. The *ſame cenſure* may be paſs'd on the boldneſs of *compounding*, and *coining new words*. *Du-Bartas* has made *himſelf* ridiculous, by attempting to imitate *Homer* and *Pindar* in the invention of *theſe* kind of words. The fourth difficulty is the *conſtraint of Rhime*: but this can only be a difficulty to the *weaker ſort* of *Wits*, who ſuffer themſelves to be maſter'd by this ſervitude, which a great *Genius* employs, to give the more force to his *Thoughts*, and more greatneſs to his *Sentiments*. The laſt difficulty, and the moſt important of all the reſt, is to know

know whether one may *pleaſe in Poetry againſt the Rules?* I apply this to the *French Poetry* particularly, though it be common to *Poetry* in general; becauſe moſt part of our *French* make a falſe Liberty of this bad Principle. 'Tis only by this, that *Moliere* would *ſalve* the ordinary Irregularity of his *Comedies.* 'Tis true, that his *Raſhneſs* has been ſucceſsful; and that he has pleas'd in his *Pieces* againſt Art. But I pretend that neither he, nor any others ſhall ever pleaſe, but by the Rules: they have ſome natural Draughts whereby they are ſucceſsful, and theſe Draughts are the Strokes of Art; for Art, as I have ſaid, is nothing elſe, but *good Senſe reduc'd to Method.* 'Tis only theſe Strokes that are *taking* in *irregular* Pieces, where what is *irregular* never pleaſes, becauſe 'tis never *natural.*

XXXIV.

FInally, to conclude with a *Touch* of *Morality.* Since the Reputation of being *modeſt*, is more worth than that of making Verſes; were I to make any, I wou'd never forſake *Honeſty* nor *Modeſty,*

deſty. For if nothing renders Men more ridiculous, than the kind Opinion they conceive of themſelves, and of their Performances; the Poets are yet more ridiculous than other Men, when their Vanity riſes from the Difficulty of ſucceeding well in their *Myſtery*. But if I made Verſe better than another, I wou'd not force any Man to find them good, I wou'd not have a greater Opinion of my ſelf, though all the World applauded them; nor ſhou'd the Succeſs blind me: amongſt the Praiſes that were beſtow'd on me, I cou'd not perſuade my ſelf to ſuffer thoſe, where appear'd ought of Favour; and I wou'd impoſe ſilence on them, who in commending me, ſpoke further than my Conſcience; to ſave my ſelf from that Ridiculouſneſs, which ſome *vain Spirits* fall into, who wou'd have Praiſes and Admirations eternally for every thing they do. I wou'd employ all my Reaſon, and all my Wit, to gain more *Docility*, and more *Submiſſion*, to the Advice my Friends ſhou'd give me; I would borrow their Lights, to ſupply the Weakneſs of mine; and I wou'd liſten to all the World, that I might not be ignorant of any of my Faults. In the Praiſes that I gave to thoſe I found

found worthy, I wou'd be ſo conſcientious, that for no Intereſt whatſoever, wou'd I ſpeak againſt my Opinion; and there ſhou'd never enter into any thing that went from my hands, any of thoſe mercenary Glances, which ſo greatly debaſe the Character of a Poet. Laſtly, I wou'd rid my ſelf of all the ridiculous Vanities, to which thoſe who make Verſe are ordinarily obnoxious: and by this prudent Conduct I wou'd endeavour to deſtroy thoſe *Fripperies*, which by Cuſtom are ſaid of a Profeſſion that might continue honourable, were it only exercis'd by Men of honourable Principles.

Names

Names of the AUTHORS whoſe *POEMS* are mentioned and Cenſured in this Book.

APpollon. Rhodius
Ariſtophanes
Acquillini
Aratus
Archilochus
Auſonius
Arioſto
Anacreon
Actius

BAcchylides
Bembo
Boccace
Boyardo
Bonnefons
Bonarelli
Brebeuf
Buchanan
Du-Bartas
Boetius

CAlphurnius
Catullus
Cæſar
Callimachus
Claudian
Camoens
Chiabrera
Calaber
Cervantes
Ceriſantes
Caſimire
Coluthus

DAnte
Diego Ximenes

ENnius
Euripides
Eſchylus
Erataſthenes

FRacaſtorius

GAllus
Garnier
Gracchus
Grotius
Guarini
Gongara

Homer

Names of the Authors, &c.

Homer
Heſiod
Horace
Heinſius
Habert

Ion

Livius Andornicus
Lotichius
Lope de Vega
Lucretius
Lucilius
Lucan
Lycophron
Lane

Magdelenet
Marot
Malapertus
Mecænas
Menander
Martial
Malherb
Moliere
Molza
Le Moyne
Marino
Muret
Muſæus
Mamercus

Nemeſianus
Nicander
Nonnus

Ovid
Oppian
Orpheus
Oliviero

Prudentius
Pontanus
Politianus
Paleotti
Philetas
Preti
Pindar
Plautus
Propertius
Perſius
Petrarch
Pulci
Petronius
Pacuvius

Quevedo

Quevedo

Rablais
Racan
Ronſard
Rotrou
Reignier
Rutilius

Sappho
Sophocles
Seneca
Sidonius Apollinaris
Sidronius
Stephonius
Statius
Silius Italicus
Scaliger Julius
Scaliger Joſephus
Sadolet
Sanazarius
Sarazin
Soſitheus
Serres
Sanĉte Marthe

Taſſo Bernardo
Taſſo Torquato
Tryphiodorus
Theocritus
Terence
Tibullus
Teſti
Tyrtæus
Triſtan
Triſſino
Theophile

Valer. Flaccus
Virgil
Vida
Voiture

FINIS.